Peso tumbles to historic low of 55.90 to US dollar

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DOY LAUREL: Family, embody remembered for giving way to Cory Aquino, then making the political opposition's fight for survival against the Marcos dictatorship

Malacañang wants state funeral for Laurel

By Juliet Labog-Javellana, Jerome Aning and Michael Lim Ubac

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday consulted with the family of former Vice President Salvador "Doy" Laurel and offered a state funeral befitting an "extraordinary statesman."

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo had conveyed to Laurel's family the wish of the President to incur him with some honors at the Libingan ng mga Bayani.

Bunye said Lacierda observed to his host we are with some honors for his fight against the Marcos dictatorship as a critical point in the country's history.

Laurel set aside his ambition to become vice president in favor of late Benigno Aquino Jr.'s widow, Corazon Aquino, as the opposition candidate against strongman Ferdinand Marcos in the 1986 snap presidential election.

The President extends her sympathy to the family and loved ones of the late Vice President Salvador Laurel," Bunye said in a statement.

"He loved freedom and valiantly fought for it," Bunye said. "He showed time and time again by his

ENCARNACION, A2

'Fix system' was Doy's dying wish

By Veh Cuaresma

HIS dying wish was "to fix the system."

The man who gave up his ambition to be president in favor of Corazon Aquino in the twilight years of the Marcos dictatorship died yesterday of massive cardiomyopathy.

Former Vice President Salvador "Doy" Laurel was 75.

Laurel passed away at 11:32 a.m. Tuesday (12:32 a.m. Wednesday in Hinadul in his Alabang home in Cuidadela. He died "peacefully in his sleep," with his wife Celia Diaz, children and in-laws at his side, according to Jose Oliveros, his lawyer.

As he wished, the anti-dictatorial and man of the year President Jose P. Laurel will be cremated and his ashes will be Oliveros said in the statement.

The ashes will stay at Sanctuario de San Antonio at Forbes Park, instead of the Church of the atonement on Feb. 1 as first announced John.

VEH, A3

Conserve water, take 'palanggana' plunge

By Jaime Laboy-Javellana

6 officers arrested for exposé vs GMA

Group denounces plot to derail President's rivals

REVELATION: The alleged core of a group calling itself "Kawal" (Soldier) which held a press conference on Monday in a residence south of Manila claimed that they are being used as instruments of the Palace to work against its political enemies.

By Fe Zamora
[illegible]
and Alexis Pape

A GROUP of young military officers has accused President Macapagal-Arroyo of using the Armed Forces of the Philippines "to murder and restrict the movements" of Rod Reyes, Bernardito Pon Jr. and Fredie Lacson and "undermine their chances" of winning the presidential election.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye, quoting Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita, said the allegations of the group, which calls itself "Kawal Pilipino (Filipino Soldier)," were "part of destabilization moves" against the administration.

Last night, Bunye said six members of Kawal Pilipino had been arrested and charged in connection with the alleged plot to kill Reyes. Senior Reyes said that the Kawal Pilipino members were arrested yesterday and the other day "solely in Metro Manila" and that they were being held at the Philippine Marine headquarters in Fort Bonifacio in Taguig, Metro Manila.

Arroyo said those arrested were members of the Philippine Army with the rank of captain. They are being investigated for possible violation of the Articles of War.

In an press issue, intelligence operatives were reportedly conducting operations to arrest other members of the group.

At a press conference this week, the group said the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp) and the Intelligence and Security Group (ISG)

CONTINUED, A2

GMA tells traders: The choice is clear

By Gil Cabuenga Jr.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday told businessmen that they could either place their bets on the next thing as her May presidential election or take a risk on "untested" leadership, and make the country the "laughingstock of the world."

"The choice is yours," said Mrs Macapagal-Arroyo before the joint meeting of some of the country's biggest business groups.

The President reminded the businessmen that "too much is at stake" in the coming presidential election as she exhorted them to "think hard about the Philippines you want.

"There's no room for half measures, for horse-setting, for wishful thinking," said Mrs Macapagal, one of the six presidential candidates.

She said the country "can continue to have the confidence of the international community and companies that have resident in investment of billions of pesos or hundreds of millions of dollars, and millions of high-paying jobs here. Or we can lose that confidence, we can lose the allies and we can lose the jobs that come with them."

Mrs Macapagal made her quick before members of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Employers Confederation of the Philippines, Philippine Inc., Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc. and Direct Exporters Confederation Inc.

The President, who prepared her speech with the phrase "well fight," was obviously trying to steer back the businessmen who were generally chummed up previous meetings by those leading presidential candidates—senate actor Fernando Poe Jr., former Education Secretary Raul Roco and Sen. Panfilo Lacson.

"We already feel how the forces of the past, including the narrow-minded, are exploiting the fears of the masses. They are not fighting for change; they are fighting to restore the

GMA, PEL, A2

SC votes 7-6 to grant 30-day stay to 2 convicts

By Jerome Aning
Maryjean C. Ortiz
and Juliet Labog-Javellana

THE CONDEMNED men smiled through their tears Malacañang announced a halt to preparations for their Friday execution after the Supreme Court voted yesterday to grant a 30-day stay pending another review of their case.

Voting 7-6, the justices said they need at least time to consider whether claims of new evidence would warrant a fresh trial for convicted kidnappers Roberto Lara and Roderick Licayan.

The two-page resolution was dated Jan. 28 but was released only yesterday by the tribunal's public information office. It was issued following oral arguments on Monday concerning the motion of the Public Attorney's Office (PAO) to reopen the case because of alleged new evidence that could exonerate the two convicts.

After hearing the issues and the arguments raised, the court resolved to consider the incidents submitted for consideration," the justices said, adding that the 30-day stay would start on Jan. 27.

They ordered copies of the resolution transmitted to the office of President Macapagal-Arroyo and to Justice Undersecretary Dionisio Santiago, director of the Bureau of Corrections (Bucor).

Malacañang issued a statement from Mr Macapagal-Arroyo giving in to pressures for the lifted injection of Lara and Licayan, the first convicts scheduled for execution since she exempted kidnapper and drug offenders from the 4-year moratorium on capital punishment.

SC VOTES, A2

HERE'S LOOK: Mother and 2 children of the condemned man Roberto Lara.

Stay clear of migratory, pet birds, gov't warns

MIGRATORY birds could bring bird flu to the Philippines and the country's various geographic isolation and the government's ban on poultry imports from infected countries, an official of the Department of Agriculture yesterday said.

Bernd Avila, director of the agriculture department's quarantine office, said officials had begun an information campaign warning people to stay away of migratory birds that landed usually Back in The Philippines during winter. (See related story in The World, page A8)

Aside from migratory birds, people should stay clear of pet birds, Avila said.

"We already advised all travelers and to bring in any pet birds and at the same time not visit any [poultry farms anywhere] in Asia," he said.

The warning came even as foreign experts voiced doubts whether migratory birds were spreading the disease that has already killed at least 13 Asians.

"Until we [see migratory birds,

The Globe, A2

More BIR, customs officials probed on lifestyle

OTHER "big fish," particularly those holding "sensitive positions" at the Bureau of Customs and of Internal Revenue, are being subjected to a lifestyle check, according to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

She was talking about the President's statement as the Department of Finance formally filed graft charges yesterday against three BIR and two BOC officials who had linked briefly to Shu Ki.

DOF investigators said that they were building graft cases against about 100 tax officials of the two bureaus, and that the public could finally be able to get back at corrupt public servants causing the loss of some P200 billion in taxpayers' money annually.

Ms Macapagal said that as gathered from the interviewees in the tax and duty collections, the lifestyle check had been successful in curbing corruption. "It makes any government official who attempts to profit illegally from their positions," she said.

She lauded the DOF for its ongoing lifestyle checks on BIR and BOC officials, saying it had helped regain the trust of the citizens in the fight against the culture of corruption.

"Kilusang is above the law, but no one is so rich that they will be given due process," the President said in reference to the five officials charged yesterday with graft for unexplained wealth, diversion of public funds and falsification of public documents.

She said she would "fight the execution impact of corruption" and the investigation of Shu Ki. Ombudsman Lee making government contracts even more transparent to the public.

Assistant Finance Secretary Emmanuel Bonoan said it was "significant" that some of the cases filed involve employees whose [illegible] had been earlier in

A3
WEATHER FORECAST
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 2004
Second FRONTPAGE

Congress deadlocked on budget

THREE WISES AND A KISS
Sen. Loren Legarda gets three wises and a surprise kiss from one of her best friends in the Senate, Jinggoy Estrada, during yesterday's celebration of the vice presidential candidate's 44th birthday. Estrada, one of the leaders of the administration party in the Senate, wished Legarda good luck as running mates of opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr.

By Michael L. Ubac, Cynthia D. Balana and Christine O. Avendaño

THE SENATE and the House of Representatives are still deadlock on the proposed P982.8-billion national budget for this year after neither house or a compromise for the 2003 budget up the alleged prodding of Malacañang.

Sen. Manuel Villar, who sharply heated the approval of the General Appropriations Act of 2004 in the Senate last Friday, yesterday accused the ruling party Lakas-CMD of "laying the groundwork for the resurrection" of the 2003 budget in favor of the 2004 budget.

"This is wrong. This is an irresponsible act," declared Villar in a press conference. "The Senate will not, and should not, agree to this."

Villar, a member of the administration coalition in the Senate, warned that failure to pass this year's budget would "give the President a greater flexibility" to allocate the funds "for the upcoming elections."

Asked about the motive behind it, he said, "It's political."

"It is important for the Congress to send a version of the budget because Senate is also we would give a big advantage to the administration, and I will not allow the Senate to be used in any party to further personal interests," Villar warned.

The proposed budget for 2004 is now being deliberated by the Senate and House panels in the bicameral conference committee.

To ensure the passage of the budget, opposition Sen. Loren Legarda urged President Macapagal Arroyo to "crack the whip" on the allies in Congress.

Legarda warned that a new, acted budget "would send a wrong perception that Malacañang is out to use government resources to fund the reelection campaign of the President, rather than bankroll the implementation of vital programs aimed at promptly pulsing the economy."

She said there were suspicions that government officials opposed only under the truncated 2003 budget to give the President discretionary powers to realign funds to fund her political campaign.

Maneuverings

At the lower house, Minority Leader Carlos Padilla and Bohol Rep. Rodez Tagbilo said they would oppose maneuverings by administration to have the 2003 budget resurrected as this would place the expired outlay back to taking P72 billion and the pork barrel of legislators under the full discretion of the President.

"The capital outlay is a very attractive item of the budget because the could now make it 100 percent campaign funds. If the budget is resurrected, she will be the one to identify the projects and the pork barrel will be oriented for the release of the money," Padilla told the business.

"This means that congressmen and senators will chair Malacañang to have either send him up for the election of the pork barrel. Every appropriation legislation will be forced to fall in line," he said.

Senate President Franklin Drilon yesterday contended that the Senate could not do anything if the House does not send its counterpart in passing the proposed 2004 budget.

"I do not rule out call, we must get the cooperation of the House and if they refuse to have the budget passed, we cannot do anything," Drilon told reporters.

According to Villar, Malacañang should try to talk with her partymates in the House to change their position because "whether we like it or not, people will think that it will [benefit] the President."

Reluctant

Villar said that the Bicameral Conference panel is reluctant to pass the budget bill," and Villar. "The excuse is that [our] chair remains hostile. He says [in the House] is interested to [sit with us] regarding the budget. It's unreasonable. How could the house [be servant to]."

Villar warned that once Congress fails to enact the 2004 budget before it takes a break on Feb. 6, the old budget would be automatically reenacted under the Constitution.

He explained that under the scenario, the President can realign allocations because the funding for projects under the 2003 budget had been released and spent last year.

"So all those money [for the old projects or allocations] would automatically became savings and lump sum, and therefore the President can realign them because the budget for projects under the 2003 budget had been released and spent last year.

"That's their intention," Villar disclosed.

Compensation bill flawed, says US lawyer

By Chena Pascalegue and Cecilio Pulido

THE UNITED States lawyer who helped win the class-suit of Marcos human rights victims victims in a Hawaii court has taken issue with a bill being debated in Congress that proposes to compensate the victims.

Robert Swift, the lead counsel in the class suit that secured a judgment of $3.6 billion for the claimants in 1995, said House Bill 4035 says even though with "flaws" and actually went against the interests of the 9,539 victims.

HB 4035, authored by Reps. Rodolfo Fernandez, proposes to set aside $200 million (P10.4 billion) for the victims from the $684 million recovered in ill-gotten assets of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos that the Supreme Court ordered confiscated and returned to the government.

Legislators are rushing to pass a compensation law to indemnify the rights abuse victims without which the extra $684 million would go to the government's agencies reform program.

In a list, 29 SPED to Rondez, Swift pointed to what he said was "one serious and fatal flaw" in Section 4 of the bill which requires the various who receive compensation to waive their claims to other recovered loot from the Marcos estate.

"This waiver would be in contravention of the Hawaii judgment because it would prohibit execution on any Marcos property," Swift told Senators who is a claimant herself.

Swift, who is still fighting the government now vested of the $35 million Arabia account allegedly belonging to Marcos on behalf of the claimants, said the waiver provision could be challenged for being unconstitutional.

The Presidential Commission on Good Government seized in 2000 recovered the 658 million Marcos assets being held by the New York-based brokerage firm, Merrill Lynch, under the account of the Banque Saudi Arabia Inc., one of the Marcos dummy foundations.

Swift also opposed the provision that entitles those "entitled to a declassified, not surveyed" during award law for compensation. He said they would increase the recipients from 9,539 to about 130,000, with compensation averaging $1,000 each.

"That is an unacceptable amount," he said.

The Hawaii court only recognized victims of torture, summary executions and disappearance.

Arbitrary detention is "merely a violation of domestic law," said Swift.

But Makati Rep. Teodoro Locsin Jr. introduced an amendment to HB 4035, removing "unconstitutional" that he said may subject the bill to challenge before the Supreme Court.

"Between a human life and a human factory [computer], the latter is more important," Locsin said in an interview.

The Locsin amendment would result in government freebies—the Locsins, Yuchengs and Lopezes, among others—who battled the Marcos dictatorship being compensated as victims of the regime.

Locsin and Lopez Jr. and others "fought the dictatorship with their property as much as they did with their lives."

Rekindle the embers of hope.

On Jan. 11, 2004, more than 25,000 people were left homeless due to a fire that razed the Tacloban City Public Market. Residents were moved to nine evacuation centers and were hard hard. Clothes, medicine, vitamins, toiletries, mats, blankets, milk, feeding bottles and clean water have accumulated and be sustained through the Rekindling Romeo campaign, one misadventure that Filipinos care and are famous to their core way by helping others out of difficult times.

HOW TO HELP:

* For bulk donations — DHRO-NCR Director Alice R. Bala, Ms. Dominga Godinez and Ms. Lucelle Sadio, 388 San Rafael Street, Legaspi, Manila or call 7340647/521 1127
* For monetary donations — Manila Bank of Social Welfare St. Jose St. Barangka, Manila City Hall, or call 527-8870/527-8860
* For perishable goods — Barangay Office Chairman Ben Lumanlan, Barangay 649, Bagong Lipa, Romeo or call 0301047
* Restaurants, restaurants & Partner service stations in the NCR region will also serve as drop-off centers.

Operation Tulong

AUTOMATED POLLS

Comelec, Mega Pacific ask SC to reconsider

By Marie P. Hartl and Jeremie Rating

THE COMMISSION on Elections and the consortium which won the voided P1.3-billion automated counting machine contract for the May elections yesterday asked the Supreme Court to reconsider its Jan. 13 decision.

The motions for reconsideration were filed separately by the Comelec and Mega Pacific Corp., the consortium that won the contract and ordered voided by the Supreme Court.

In its 97-page motion, Mega Pacific Corp., through lawyer Alberto Lazaro Jr., also asked the court to admit his evidence to a bid to include the court's findings, to set a date for the hearing of the case and the evidence and to dismiss the case filed by the Information Technology Foundation of the Philippines.

Lazaro said that should the Supreme Court decide to reconsider the case and reverse its earlier ruling, the Comelec can still proceed with its automation, with the same number of counting machines, under the newly enacted law on selective automation.

"We are asking the Supreme Court to please reconsider the facts again because the findings of the fact, findings and conclusions of the Commission are not in accord with the records... not consistent that there were a lot of infractions committed by the other party," Lazaro said in a press conference.

The Supreme Court, in its decision, had criticized the Comelec for including the new votes in Mega Pacific Consortium which it said did not participate in the bidding. It noted that the Comelec had actually signed the automation contract with Mega Pacific subsidiary, Smartmatic, despite the court order restraining it and which joined the bidding but did not meet the eligibility requirements.

It also said that the software being used was not only a "demo" version and that the actual version was still being developed after the bidding was already held.

"They [Supreme Court] were indicating that there is only one consortium filled which had filed. That is not true because it was the second one which bidded for it, SOBI was only the local consortium, the final proponent consortium was Smartmatic and on behalf of the consortium members of the consortium," he explained.

In his motion for reconsideration, Lazaro said that the Supreme Court made "unsubstantiated findings of fact" as it merely relied on the allegations filed by the ITFP adding that the consortium "is ill equipped."

He also said that the Supreme Court erred when it nulled the ITFP petition was not premature as its members did not exhaust administrative remedies for protest.

Aside from this, the lawyer said that the Department of Budget and Management's "nulled funds" in the automated counting machines, tabulating and local copies.

For his part, Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos said in a phone interview that their motion for reconsideration supposedly answered all the issues raised in the decision.

Anti-piracy bill approved

By Cynthia D. Balana

A HOUSE bill that imposes a minimum penalty of P1 million would now be imposed on those found guilty of violating the copyright laws on film and music piracy has been approved by the House of Representatives and the Senate and is now awaiting signature by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Speaker Jose de Venecia said the bill, known as the Optical Media Act, will form part of a cooperative effort against intellectual piracy between the Philippines and the United States.

The measure was approved during last year's state visit to the Philippines by US President George W. Bush.

"I have signed the enrolled copy of the senate version containing the said bill and the same is Senate President Franklin Drilon or the House Secretary-General could transmit it to the President for her final review and signature," De Venecia said.

The bill punishes pirates of intellectual property rights, the illegal manufacture, exploitation and sale of any recordable media, devices and which information, including cassette or tapes. Based or unlimited in any number to any unlicensed or scanned.

THUMBS UP for President Macapagal-Arroyo from members and former leaders of the militant groups who formed the group aptly named Pro-Gloria. JOEY BARCIA

Yes, Cabinet men can campaign

By Blanche S. Rivera

INFO after reports came out that Malacañang had reminded to all the President's men to campaign for the chief executive, a Cabinet member confirmed that they had talked about Cabinet members' possible involvement in "political activities" during a meeting in the Palace early this month.

Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said that the Cabinet meeting last Jan. 7 had indeed touched on the members being engaged in political activities during the elections, but she said she did not mention any names formalizing the discussions or instructing Cabinet members to boost Mr Macapagal's bid.

"[However], there was a timeline to that effect, Sto. Tomas said that this did not include any time because even Cabinet members are allowed to engage in political activities such as campaigning for a candidate during elections while serving their office in government.

Sto. Tomas, a former chief of the Civil Service Commission, said that political appointees, officials co-terminous with the appointing authority, and other government officers, along with their confidential staff, are allowed under the Administrative Code to be involved in political exercises.

She cited section 55 of the Administrative Code and certain provisions in the revised Omnibus Election Code allowing the political involvement of incumbent officials to a certain extent.

"The Labor chief said that supporting a candidate does not violate anything as government officials do not prejudice the other parties before official functions.

Pro-GMA group calls for stop to mudslinging

By TJ Burgonio

STOP the mudslinging and focus on issues.

This is the challenge to opposition candidates issued yesterday by a newly formed group supporting the candidacy of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The Pro-Gloria or Progressive and Responsible Organizations for Good Leadership, Unrelenting Reforms and Intelligent Activism also gave its reaction to opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr.'s plan to have Ms Macapagal-Arroyo impeached.

"The issues should not be burdened with the issue of disqualification. Let us instead discuss who has done something for the people," said Alex Cacapitan, member of the group's national coordinating council.

Dr Jo Aquino, spokesperson of the Pro-Gloria, said the group was not a coalition or any party with the camps of the five other presidential candidates. "Our campaign focuses on the policy agenda advocated by the administration. We would be happy to debate with the camps of FPJ (Fernando Poe Jr.) and [Panfilo] Lacson, and discuss issues, point by point," he said yesterday at the launch of Pro-Gloria at the Bonifacio restaurant in Quezon City.

Tomas announced Monday that he would petition the Commission on Elections to disqualify Mr Macapagal for leaving the Cabinet post but same "private campaign organization," noting that she had asked Cabinet members not to use campaign tactics.

Malacañang officials dismissed this as plain grandstand.

The group also said they had nothing to do with Mr Macapagal's "Starring Arroyo" poster on all the official plastic of the country's.

"We cannot claim this as part of Pro-Gloria activities, but we think people have that right. We will coordinate with Gloria to implement a systematic putting up of posters in accordance with the law," Cacapitan said.

"We will begin our activities at the start of the campaigning period," added Aquino.

Pro-Gloria, which credits Ms Macapagal with turning the economy around and creating war economy, drug trafficking and kidnapping, among others, aimed to campaign for her "through solid networking and organizing" in the countryside.

Pro-Gloria is composed of Kalipan ni Gloria-Macapagal Arroyo, Sigaw Pinoy, Lakas Ding Kulay, Agenasi ng Supersigaw, 1-Gloria, Kalusugan ng Mamamayan para sa Bayan, Kabalikat ng Mga Manggagawa para sa Bayan, Kaisipang OFW, United Filipino Seafarers, National Confederation of Trucks Operators and Drivers Associations, Muslim Power and Order Council Metro Manila and Team Gloria.

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THE GSIS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) is now accepting applications from qualified incoming college students for the **GSIS College Scholarship Program for SY 2004-2005**.

To qualify for the program, applicants must be a direct and legitimate children of active GSIS members and must have a general average or 85% or its equivalent. They also need to submit to the GSIS Main Office or to the nearest GSIS Branch or District Offices the following requirements:

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Qualifiers who meet the GSIS Criteria for Selection shall take the GSIS Competitive Examination to be administered by the Center for Educational Measurement.

Those who will be selected as GSIS scholarship grantees shall be required to enroll only in any of the 4 or 5-yr. **GSIS Priority Courses**: Accountancy, Actuarial Science, Business Administration, Computer Science and related IT courses, Economics, Engineering major in Computer, Civil, Electrical & Electronics, Electronics & Communications, Industrial, Management and Mechanical only, Finance, Management, Marketing, Mass Communications, Mathematics and Statistics.

Deadline of application is on 2 April 2004.

For more details, please **visit the GSIS Main Office or your nearest GSIS Branch/District Office** or contact Emma, Nelda, Meljune and/or Marlou of the GSIS-HRDD Scholarship Staff at Tel. Nos. 551-1878 or 891-6161 locals 4852/4853.

For raising civil war scare, GMA hits Erap

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is not pleased with the statement of her detained predecessor warning the Supreme Court of a civil war if the high court should decide to disqualify his bosom buddy Fernando Poe Jr. from running for President.

Asked via President Joseph Estrada said the dismissal of the disqualification case against Poe by the Commission on Elections was meant to set the stage for an adverse ruling from the high court [illegible] the complainants have declared the disqualification case.

"What I can say is that we should not preempt the Supreme Court. This is the highest interpreter of the law and we should always respect its decisions," the President said in an interview with ABS-CBN radio.

"All political leaders should take the path of prudence and accept any decision and abide by the said opinion and decision," she said. Julius Ludwig Jarellano

Valle; 87

ROMERO Lagman Valle, of Tolosa, Leyte, died last Tuesday. She was 87 years old.

She is survived by her children Virginia, Luisa, Lydia, Imelda, Judith, Sophia and grandchildren.

Her remains lies at the Funeraria Paz, Manila Memorial Park, in Tolosa, Tacloban.

The burial date will be announced later.

How Many Pounds Do You Want To Lose This Year?

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"When I lost 14 lbs., I became slimmer and more confident with my shape!" - Mikki

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BEFORE at 128 lbs.

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BEFORE at 131 lbs.

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Campaign vehicle sorties to go

By Tess R. Salazar

WANTED: Beasts of burden to carry politicians from the road to the throne.

Preparations are being made for the "coaching test to see who can find the cheapest but still sound-of-wind-and-limb" horse to house-pretty as home the most gimmick.

If you are on the campaign trail—either as a candidate or actively supporting one—what would be your vehicle of choice? Should it be a Land Cruiser 4x4, or a commuter multi-purpose vehicle?

During the Aquino era, the Tahoe could be seen using Toyota Hilux vehicles, according to Toyota communications man Jerry Isles. He also swung on to say that Aquino was considered as having one of the toughest campaign vehicles in the world.

Toyota Hilux

Politicians' vehicle of choice

Therefore, the Hilux, he said, should be the politicians' vehicle of choice in their campaigns—not that this country is going to the Salduas, but that those politicians need the kind of support the Tahoe's good at—and the aura and resources (especially the money) of Mitsubishi.

But Ground Affairs says the Tahoe, the latter knows like its all-terrain counterpart, from the United States. Ground Affairs also has an Isuzu version in the Hilux.

Isuzu's Orion BIG and whenever you see SUV convoys in the news, look at the kinds of pickups and says that on 5

Ford Escape

If you are on the campaign trail—either as a candidate or actively supporting one—what would be your vehicle of choice?

would always love the touch of Toyota. And what you see is what you get—no less performance for about seven minutes.

"The Hilux is unlike other pickups, which specialize on the frontmost decks and front housing over of on-the-bumper to always convenient. In our case, our Hilux is common around your every days basis."

Other recommended vehicles

Of course, Toyota is not all Hilux. Other recommended vehicles of Land Cruising work are its diesel-powered Prado and Model, both of which use Land Rover's screaming, hard-core servicing balloon bearing, mirror transducers. Price-wise and engine-wise, the two would also be the greatest choice one for Jesus.

The 2.4-liter diesel 4x4x4 commuter is worth P927,000. More affordable for just as strong is the 10-seater Revo DSC 2.4 diesel manual transmission priced at P675,000.

For all-terrain walks, the 2.4-liter Hilux diesel 4x4 and 2.4-liter 4x2 are notable. The 4x2's also has two grades. The 2400 is the dressed-up sports type, which costs P1.098 million. The base-line version, the deluxe model, costs P1.126 million.

If the Hilux isn't your style of your party, try the legendary Toyota Land Cruiser. Up to us, however, adds that the prohibitive price of the Land Cruiser would barely scare any candidate in our shore for campaign season. The Land Cruiser 80 series Prado and the previous model is P3.6 million (roughly) and P3.7 million.

"Even if politicians find Land Cruiser, they wouldn't be doing the choosing because they're using all their money for the campaign. They could, perhaps, buy after the elections when there's nothing left in their funds," he says.

The Isuzu only other candidates would be our rolling SUV and rule around on pickups and AUVs to promote their major image (or bit cars, according to him, SUVs are more of a status-prone lifestyle than an asset.

Still, politicians cannot do without many luxuries. For them, the look of a vehicle is a bit overriding that would reduce on the system. A high-ground clearance and a moment around for a door maintenance for a driver can on the countryside where doesn't look as cool a motor view, and no refusing public swooning to see you arrive your bunch of flyers.

Viable 'candidates'

And if politicians really feel the moment, they can round up through the moment and be like the Boys. The high-ground clearance comes in handy when crossing rivers and streams in search of the farthest barangay to woo. The Jeepy Wrangler starts from 1.6 million, the Explorer Sportrac with doors, roof and Ford Escape SUV are viable "candidates" that would get the candidates used.

The Ford Escape 2.0 litre 4x4 SUV possesses characteristics (which we test drove December's issue) that could be picked up who might accept SUV as big boss city to participate and raise the off-roads in an particular order or else, and would make the condition of a luxury car like Jesus. The Escape's ride, under 2.0 series first, not too soft, and it by car motioning feel right. Complimenting cars as simple as the motion of the Escape.

"Before pitches would also find the Escape a commuter from all those overlaying digital features. The motor system is simple. Previous Ford Limbs will tell you, of your questions, what to anticipate in case you have a rather over-sensitive urging whenever you're either tired or concentrated and you quickly want the vehicle up or down or your place switch to the next one rotates, depending on your speed.

The Escape's power roof is more than luxurious. Though it provides an easy vantage for the public to see you go from end to end, and wave your hands in the air like you just don't care, the moon roof allows you a glimpse of where your audience can take you during those rallies sometimes at night.

The Escape and SUV have comfort, no matters are, does not impose on your character. That's the days of the sways. The moon roof vehicle is simple in its design, as open cockpit gives character and points to the occupants' interests and interests.

For P1.245 million, the powered upper accordingly with the power of a 16 makes the Escape fit for a driving politician, whether for or less roadworthy owners or drivers.

'Fix system' . . .

Malacañang wants state funeral for Laurel

From page A1

Laurel, best known as a political veteran who was forced to push to recognize Japan to boost the opposition's bid against President Marcos in the 1969 vote elections, wished to be remembered as "somebody who was thinking of his country even in his sickbed," according to son Bread.

"He kept on repeating that we have to fix the system, para pamahalaan na ang bahay ng mga kababayan natin (to improve the quality of life of our countrymen)," Bread recalls in an interview in Manila as he recalled his father's last days.

In a recent hospital exposé, Dilawan said his then ailing client still looked forward to running for Senate in a comeback and convention and push for a shift to a parliamentary federalist system of government and a return to the two-party system.

Medical treatment

Laurel, who also served as a senator and foreign secretary, went to California in June last year for medical treatment.

He top was allowed by the Amelgamation who he was fighting a gout case in connection with the alleged Commercial Bank project scam.

As chair of the National Centennial Commission under the Ramos administration, Laurel was accused of inappropriately awarding a contract to build a 20,000-seat amphitheater in Cloth Field, Pampanga, and increasing the budget for construction almost fivefold. He wrongly denied the charge.

Amazing recovery

By August of last year, he was undergoing chemotherapy for lymphoma, or cancer of the lymphoid tissue, at the Stanford Hospital in San Francisco. On the third time he was administered the intensive care unit. Laurel went into coma for 21 days before recovering on Jan. 5.

Laurel's recovery "amazed" brother doctor, David said. "He also remained functional and articulate. That's when he started making Antonio (making him write) his wishes."

By the 22nd of this month, the elder Laurel asked that all support systems sustaining him be removed and that he be brought back home at 9 Gold Place, Ishmeon, David said.

He managed to eat again and, "even sing" while at home. But four days after leaving the hospital, he suffered a lung infection that caused his condition to deteriorate.

Dilawan and Laurel visited exhibiting difficulties in breathing on the 27th. That day he received the Last Sacrament from a Filipino priest, Fr. Peter Cuyos of the Church of the Nativity in Atherton.

Youngest senator

Born Nov. 15, 1920 in Tiaw, Manila, the late Laurel is the fifth son of the President of the second Philippine Republic and Doña Sotero Hidalgo.

A Yale-educated lawyer, Laurel married Celia Diaz with whom he had eight children: Susan, Lennie, Cocoy, Dodel, Lucy, Stella, Bread and Sonia.

In 1947, a decade after his father's death, Laurel first entered politics and became the youngest senator produced by the Nacionalista Party, to the extent that the late Marcos affy Ferdinand "Nimo" Aquino was the youngest Liberal Party senator.

He was elected in 1971 to the Interim Batasang Pambansa, but in 1981 he quit as chairman of the legislative body "since it failed to do its part in dismantling the oppressive of martial law."

Leads opposition

He founded United—or Ubi Unida Oposicion Democratica Organization, the bandwagon alliance Marcos used a growing public outrage over Pilipinas assassination in August 1983.

But despite being nominated as the opposition's standard-bearer, he eventually agreed to let the unconventional running mate of Cory Aquino, Salvador Laurel, lead the nationalist outfit in the 1984 snap election called by Marcos.

In 1992, Laurel ran for presidency under the Nacionalista Party but lost to rival Fidel Ramos.

'Self-sacrifice'

The University of the Philippines Alumni Association, honoring Laurel in June 2003, called his deed "a modern day of self-sacrifice meant to unite voices against the well-oiled political machinery of the Marcos regime."

With the combination of the Erie Edes People Power revolt, Aquino and Laurel were sworn in president and vice president, respectively, on Feb. 25, 1986.

Under Aquino, he briefly served as peace minister and minister of foreign affairs.

When President Fidel V. Ramos appointed Laurel to head the Centennial Commission, which oversaw preparations for the country's celebration of 100th independence anniversary in 1998.

But last March, the ombudsman charged Laurel with graft on allegations that he anomalously executed the Centennial Expo contract and increased the project's budget from the original P200 million to P1.16 billion.

Not guilty plea

The former Vice President pleaded not guilty when arraigned last June.

Laurel was also the country's delegate to the UN General Assembly from 1960 to 1970.

He spent his elementary and high school years in the cities of Manila and Tay La Salle, respectively. While in La Salle, he joined a group of young men who planned to go to Indonesia and help Sukarno in his struggle for independence from the Dutch, but local authorities stopped them at the pier.

He initially took up Medicine at the University of the Philippines but switched two years later to Law, a profession he would share with his father and brothers. He later earned his master's degree in Public Administration.

From page A1

his historic decision in 1986 when he joined forces with former President Corazon Aquino.

Aquino, through her spokesperson Lourdes Sereno, expressed condolences to the family of Laurel, her vice-presidential and secretary of foreign affairs.

"I will always remember Doy for helping unite the Opposition against the dictator Marcos," said Aquino, who along with Laurel, was sworn into office on Feb. 25, 1986, following a people power revolt that toppled the late Marcos.

Even in death, Laurel drew praises and the respect from his peers and the politician not only for his long public service, but for his self-sacrifice in uniting the opposition.

Special place

"He will forever have a special place in the heart of every freedom-loving Filipino, Congress resolution statement.

The Vice President said that throughout Laurel's public life, he stood out fought for the preservation of the country's democratic institutions.

"He never blinked against the dictatorship, and when it was necessary, he fully unite the political opposition, Doy displayed true statesmanship and set aside his own desires to be president," he said.

True nationalist

Like Gonzales, Laurel was also appointed to head the Department of Foreign Affairs. Lau-

THE SERENITY of his residence in Bilian, Laguna offers Cloy Laurel respite from his long unfamiliar as the country's Vice President and foreign affairs secretary during the Cory Aquino administration.

rel served in DFA secretary from February 1986 to August 1987.

Both Gonzales and Laurel also became estranged with the President.

In Congress, lawmakers offered their condolences to the man they described a "true nationalist."

Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr., meanwhile, Laurel as a defender of the nation's sovereign properties at a time when the government was planning to sell the Roppongi property to Japan.

Laurel had argued that the government could not simply sell the property without congressional approval. The Supreme Court sustained his arguments, saying that the parliament Roppongi property was a gift to the Filipino people.

House Deputy Speaker Raul Gonzalez said the death of Laurel marked the loss of a "great statesman."

Bataan Congressman of Electrician Chair Herrer Dominguez said she was saddened by the death of Laurel. "The country has just lost a great statesman and a patriot. His life had been marked by his tireless struggle for truth and justice."

6 officers arrested for exposé against GMA

Front page A1 >

were implementing the presidential directive through the Department of National Defense (DND).

GMA order

"The specific order is ... to correct the movements of her political opponents, and when I say her, I say Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo," the group's spokesperson, who used the pseudonym Captain Gabay (Tagalog for cockroach), said in separate interviews in a safehouse north of Manila.

Kawal Pilipino members assigned in the intelligence community have been getting "verbal orders" "months" at a time, Gabay said, with the "main objective" of "911 and Baco" and then the "more subtle check regularity of granting success in the forthcoming election," Gabay said.

He said they were "documenting" to support the "main objective," which, he said, the group would produce the documents.

"We already know who those officers are, despite their attempts to hide their identities, and the president should know. We even know the officer who read the instructions," Abaya said.

Based on the AFP's initial investigation, some of the officers are graduates of the Philippine Military Academy.

Alie

The "directive" against Lacson began soon after 86 Muslimgid activated rebels in January 2001, while the "directives" against Santos and Jose were issued recently, the Kawal Pilipino spokesperson said.

"The orders came from (Alie). That's why we are asking Secretary (Simeon) Cabral to find out (his) motives, whether he is a political officer of the current administration or the secretary of national defense," Gabay said.

Ramos dismissed the alleged coup against him as a "lie."

"I deny that," he told Reuters. "I am not stupid enough to issue that order. I challenge them to show me if I am telling a lie."

Arroyo, a retired general and former three-term member of the House of Representatives, said the allegations would be part of fresh moves to destabilize the government after an attempted coup by about 300 soldiers last July.

Abaya said the junior officers belonging to Kawal Pilipino "are being manipulated by a political group, whether unwittingly or wittingly. We will not allow the AFP to be used for any political agenda."

He said he has had yet to establish Kawal Pilipino's links to the Election Committee on the National Crisis (CNC).

Legality

Gabay said Kawal Pilipino also raised the legality of the orders with their senior officers. But they were advised to "just follow orders."

"KAWAL" discloses the national link-number of following "illegal" orders from the Macapagal administration to suppress its political opponents. GREGG SEGUIA

Rejecting another kalipunan, Gabay and five other officers, who form the core group of Kawal Pilipino and whose ages range from 30 to 32, stood behind but joined Philippine Eagle for the press conference. The word Kawal was emblazoned on the shirts of the Boys.

One of the young officers is the son of a retired colonel who signed a manifesto calling for the suspension of the elections, according to Batista. It was not immediately clear whether the colonel's son was among those arrested.

Bigger than Magdalo

"We are witnesses to how we are being used to suppress the political opposition, especially in intelligence gathering," said Gabay, who noted that Kawal Pilipino "is bigger" than the Magdalo Group that launched the failed coup on July 27 in Makati.

The Inquirer was shown a Kawal Pilipino manifesto with the names and signatures of some 30 officers, including representatives from nine divisions of the Philippine Army.

Manifesto

"We are concerned officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, representing the silent majority and supported by our seniors at brigade levels, formed by battle developments to erase the line of protocol and deviance in the strongest terms possible the shameful and dangerous politicization of the AFP," the statement said.

Gabay said the group "can no longer bear the brunt of being used as instruments of the daily scandalous and serious agitation by political opponent. Hence we are here to appeal to our leadership not to use us for political purposes."

He admitted that his group could not point to a "defined plan" such as an intelligence project, but it had a clear objective.

"But the way our leadership has given an order to monitor, harrass and limit the capability of the political opponents of GMA (Ms Macapagal), we came to a conclusion that indeed the government is using the Armed Forces to suppress his political opponents."

Mawanay

In 2003, a certain cell phone salesman Asher Mawanay was pronounced by the body as not without special. Lacson's alleged recent wondering and drug trafficking. Mawanay's testimony before a Senate justice committee has never been proved.

"Let the man that 'Mr are not disabilitating the government. We are not taking arms against the duly constituted authority," Gabay said.

He denied suggestions that politicians were behind Kawal Pilipino. "We are doing this on our own. We are not behind any candidates. We strongly oppose any plan to cover the elections. We

swear the election to push through as scheduled," he said.

Message to public

In the meantime, Kawal Pilipino said that its members "remain faithful and committed" to their sworn duties, despite "betrayal from the corrupt and greedy in the AFP chain of command."

"We send this clear message to the Filipino people ... 'We are your protectors and will not fail you when all else fail us. We will refuse to be accomplices to the betrayal of the weak and the innocent by the special interests of immoral leadership," it said.

Nothing new

The unequal Tan said there was nothing new with reports that the military was conducting surveillance operations on Mr Macapagal's political opponents.

"I think it's possible. They will try to monitor the opponents," said Wad Nonoy, head of the intelligence bureau of the Bantayan ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino Foundation (Bantay) Inc.

Bayan said the business that during campaign season, "every move of the opposition is being monitored. it is to be expected."

But he discounted the possibility of the administration creating the movement of the BNP soldiers. "I don't think so. I don't think they can control the movement." With a report from Michael Lim Ubac

SC votes 7-6 to grant 30-day stay to 2 convicts

Front page A1 >

"This comes as a relief to me, but I have always been prepared to endure the law despite my personal beliefs about the death penalty," the President said. "We follow the mandate of the Supreme Court. I have directed all preparations for the commutation to stand down. I'm so patiently wait for the high court's final ruling and continues to pray for truth and justice."

Her spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said: "The temporary stay of the execution shows that in this jurisdiction, the rights of the condemned to due process are respected."

Happiness

At the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa, Lintayan's sister Annette told reporters that their would fight for his acquittal "because he is innocent."

Larry's sister-in-law Amy said the two siblings, who were being held in cells at the isolation building, were "extremely happy" to be told of the Supreme Court's ruling.

"They were even saying that there was a big chance they could escape lethal injection," she said, adding that Larry was smiling through his tears.

Just minutes away, prison workers had just finished spruicing up the lethal injection chamber ahead of their scheduled execution.

WHILING wall: Photos of the dead men executed by lethal injection are on display at the National Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa. NONOY ESPINA

Even for its years since he was imprisoned, moved from dungeon-like cells to the present orthodox," he said.

Lacson had earlier written the popular public service program "Wish ko Lang" to help him see his children once more.

Relief

Erwin acting Bureau Director Reynerio Alfonso expressed relief at the tribunal's ruling.

"I feel relieved because the task of implementing this order is not on my shoulders. This particular victim was involved in taking not one life, but two," Alfonso said in a press conference.

He said the two convicts would be shortly returned to their cells in the maximum security compound.

Alfonso, however, stressed that the 30-day stay on the execution of Lim and Lintayan "will not affect the other executions scheduled in February."

"Once we receive the court order setting the dates of the other executions, we will immediately follow this imposed schedule," he said.

Lim and Lintayan were convicted in death by a Muntinlupa City Regional Trial Court on May 8, 1999, after being found guilty of the kidnapping for ransom of Chinese Filipino trader Joseph Thomas Co and his cashier Linda Montemayor in August 1998. The Supreme Court affirmed the decision on Aug. 19, 2003.

On Jan. 15, a few days after the arrest of two other accused in the kidnapping, RTC chief Perlita Benita Acosta petitioned the high court to reopen the case.

She said the alleged mastermind, Lim's uncle Felino Ko-hueng, and Rogelio de los Reyes, had submitted affidavits clearing the two convicts.

Reasonable doubt

Dissenting Monday's oral arguments, Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. said the tribunal's main concern was whether the affidavits of Ko-hueng and De los Reyes constituted new evidence to warrant a new trial.

Ayala said the new evidence would impair one or both witnesses. She also backed by Solicitor General Alfredo Benipayo, who said his office had no objection to having the case reopened because the affidavits had raised sufficient doubt on the convicts' guilt.

Dissatisfied

But a number of the justices were dissatisfied with the affidavits because Mahoning and De los Reyes had claimed that they were not involved in the kidnapping.

Pro-life

Several of the justices also criticized the PAO for not doing to bear to defend the two convicts, after dozens informed that the convicts' PAO counsel did not participate in preparing to the Bantibles court other witnesses who could prove Lim's innocence that he was elsewhere when the crime was committed.

Hours before the tribunal's ruling was released, Mr Macapagal said she would be happy if it would decide to stop the Friday executions.

"If they will will see to suspend the executions because they will review it the correct again, then I will be more than happy for (Abiga). But if they will not suspend, I will go ahead with it," she said in an interview over dzBB.

She also said she would proceed with the executions unless the 10-level recalled the death sentences. After all, she said, she considered the death sentence just under the law because it was handed down after a long trial by the lower court and review by the tribunal.

Mr Macapagal again defended her decision to lift the moratorium on the death penalty for convicted kidnappers and drug offenders.

"You know I really (have been) pro-life since I was a seminary," she said. "I just think that this President, there are times for matters, that need to be done."

She said she inherited the problem of kidnapping that had spooked investors. "So, she said, but to lose the confidence of the people. And also to be honest when she assumed office in 2001.

Mr Macapagal said that losing pro-life, she held the belief that the prison system was no place to rehabilitate criminals.

"But I saw that kidnap for ransom gangs, even if they are in prison, are not rehabilitated and they continue to do their crimes," she said.

Church stance

Bishop Pedro Arigo, chair of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines' Episcopal Commission on Prison Pastoral Care, said it was "very happy and grateful" for the supreme given to Lim and Lintayan, but would "continue advocating the abolition of the death penalty."

Arigo hinted that the Catholic clergy would not be likely to back Mr Macapagal in the May elections if she refuses to heed calls for a moratorium on all executions until, eventually, the abolition of capital punishment.

"If the President proceeds with her plan of resuming unorthodoxy, our choice will definitely be affected. You are read between the lines. The President need to be explicit in that regard," he told reporters.

He also said the Church leaders' stance of a president would be influenced by the candidates' stance on such issues as the death penalty.

Nation of mercy

Manila Auxiliary Bishop Socrates Villegas, who also mentioned capital punishment during the John II anniversary celebration with the President, said the nation was a nation of love and mercy.

"Thanks be to the Lord of Life," Villegas said. "May we become more a nation of mercy. Mercy is greater than justice. Love is the supreme virtue."

From fast to feast

Anti-death penalty groups led by the Coalition Against Death Penalty (CADP) and Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG) shifted from fasting for the lives of Lacson and Lim to celebrating the Supreme Court ruling.

FLAG's Cookie Dolino said opponents of death penalty had planned to fast for the lives of Lacson at the Friday executions and as part of a nine-day novena dedication to the two convicts.

Inmates of the maximum security compound had agreed to fast with them and had given them lunch of cashews to the two convicts' families, Dolino said.

"But the high courts order gave us a reason to celebrate," she said. "We think we should shift from fasting to fasting." With reports from Blanche S. Rivera

Stay clear of migratory, pet birds, gov't warns

Front page A1 >

don't catch them, don't feed them," Atoba said in a telephone interview. "We really don't know if these migratory birds come from bird flu-infected countries, but the best thing to do is to prevent people from getting near them."

10th Asian nation

Traditionally, migratory birds in the Philippines come from Alaska, Siberia and China. Major areas in the Philippines where the migratory birds stop over during winter are the Olongapo wildlife sanctuary in Iloilo, Candaba Swamp in Pampanga, Baglaloo in Quezon, mountains in Benguet, Manila Bay coastal areas, mangrove wetlands in Aklan province, and Bagacay in Cagayan Valley.

China, the world's most populous nation, became the 10th Asian nation to be hit by bird flu after officials acknowledged Tuesday that at least one duck was infected with the disease. They also reported an investigation into suspected cases of dead poultry.

First in, officials of the World Health Organization said they were still investigating whether the current weekend strikes of bird flu could have been spread by migratory birds, screaming for its rapid spread through Asia, or whether the outbreaks are unrelated.

But Philip Stoud, a bird expert at Mayfield University in Australia, said he did not think migratory birds were to blame for spreading the disease.

Scapegoat

"There are lots of migratory birds that come down from Siberia, but most of them are in arctic and live in forests or coastal wetlands," he said.

"Poultries have been a lot of bird and they are looking for a scapegoat. It's usually more likely that it originated in the huge poultry population ... and spread through the crowded conditions under which birds are kept," Stoud said.

Ban on game birds

"There just aren't enough migratory birds in close association with domestic birds. There are no birds scavenging around chicken farms or pig farms in sufficient numbers to spread the disease widely," he added.

Dr. Stanley, cock breeder, patted for a temporary ban on imported game birds coming from Asian countries hit by bird flu to prevent one of the Philippines' most popular pastimes ...cockfighting.

The Luzon Game Cock Breeders Association said it had asked Agriculture Officials to suspend the ban, and to take other steps to protect the cockfighting and breeding industry.

There are millions of game birds in the country where cockfighting is extremely popular, especially in rural areas.

Since the worst outbreak case of millions of birds have been slaughtered in Asia because of bird flu.

So far, 10 governments have reported some strain of bird flu—Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Pakistan, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam. AP

GMA tells traders: The choice is clear

Front page A1 >

course of history," she said.

Economy's savior

Aside from ending herself as an experienced leader, Mr Macapagal presented herself as the country's savior.

She pointed that in her three years in office she has restored investor confidence, created 2 million new jobs, increased foreign investments, lowered inflation rate, improved health services and continues to support the fight against crime, corruption and terrorism.

"We have restored the economy from the precipice and we inflated the mess we inherited. The Philippines think from a position of strength and respect in the international community. We are no longer a laughing stock but have a rightful place at the table," she said.

Create new jobs

Mr Macapagal promised the businessmen that she would create 6 million new jobs in the next six years, provide full enrollment in the existing 6,000 public elementary school, build 130,000 low-cost homes annually, and bring electricity to all barangays in the country.

Warring bets in South promise to behave, says PNP chief

By Christine F. Esguerra

WARRING candidates in several Mindanao election "hot spots" have given their word to the Philippine National Police that they will behave, PNP chief Director Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. said.

Ebdane said this "commitment letter" was obtained in a series of consolidation meetings with political leaders of Cotabato, Zamboanga, Sultan Kudarat, Sulu, and Basilan beginning last December.

The promised politicians promised that they would jointly take steps to prevent any violence, said Senior Supt. Ariel Coffiso, the PNP information officer.

"They promised that they will abide by the law, that they will not start any trouble," he said.

Despite getting assurances from the Mindanao politicians, however, Ebdane has increased all police units not to let their guard down.

"We're taking their word but it doesn't mean that we won't do our jobs anymore," Coffiso said.

Coffiso said most of the "election or gun ban" areas are located in the autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

EBDANE

Private armies

Of 114 private armed groups, 70 work for political leaders in the region, according to the directorate for operations.

Aside from the candidates, members of Ebdane's "council of elders" also promised to help the police to maintain order in their areas throughout the election period, said Coffiso.

These councils are composed of local leaders with no political affiliations, providing authorities with key information about crimes and other incidents and concerns raised by residents, he said.

Coffiso said the PNP was convinced that the provincial leaders would keep their word, explaining that some of the major politicians from Basilan, Cotabato, Zamboanga, Tawi-Tawi and Sulu were convening similar election peace in May.

Maguindanao

It is Maguindanao that presents the most serious problem as 22 people were killed and 66 others injured in the province when a powerful bomb went off as the gubernatorial of Pendatun bar Jun. 6.

Investigators said Mayor Wendelo Bulaga, who was injured in the blast, was the main target of the attack although it could not be his political rivals.

Coffiso said the PNP was strictly monitoring activities in Pendatun and other Maguindanao towns to prevent another bomb attack.

He said authorities were also wary of possible clashes between supporters of Maguindanao Gov. Andal Ampatuan and candidates Jimmy Mastura, a former speaker of the ARMM assembly.

As some areas such as Basilan where there were not enough policemen, Coffiso said the PNP will be getting assistance from the Armed Forces in maintaining order.

Ebdane also formed motorcycles and refurbished fast jeeps to several PNP units during his four-day swing of Sen Mindanao cities.

More BIR, customs officials probed

Turn page A-3

pected to him by **barangay officials.**

"It's frustrating to us that the public is getting involved and reporting to us only anomalies they know about," he said.

The five charged with graft in the Office of the Ombudsman were Customs collector Alberto Iglesias and airport x-ray operations chief Edgardo Galang, also of the BOC, said BIR supervisor Anita Montero and collecting agents Ariel Cuevas and Hedcen Garcia.

Hotline

Bureau did not mention who among those was the subject of the barangay officials' report, but said the member of such reports from the public is also increasing.

"We are making an appeal to the public that if they know of any act that has been committed, a being committed, or will be committed, please inform the DOF right away," he said at a press briefing.

Bureau said the DOF's Bureau Inspection Service (BIS) could be contacted through its "hot line," 484-1775.

"We take all calls," he said. "One of the cases that prospered came from that call, and we are lifting it now."

'Chilling message'

Department of Justice special prosecutor Mark Jalandoni said it was payback time for those catching them action in office at the taxpayers' expense.

Be happy

"Corruption is a crime where everybody is happy except the public. Those in the drug for the public to be happy," Jalandoni said, adding that the filing of graft charges against the third batch of officials who hailed the lifestyle checks would send a "chilling message" to the corrupt. Gil Cabacungan Jr. and Jo-mand Ti. Moreno

Conserve water . . .

Turn page A-3

Although not entirely a new idea, President Macapagal-Arroyo

In Imperial, she has asked Ople to give a rep

Because water is scarce and costly in the former dumpsite in Quezon City. The Sanyaville recycles bath water to wash her clothes and flush the toilet.

"When she takes a bath—of course, she uses a tube (dipper) because there is no running water...she steps into a basin to find water is collected [and there] until to wash her laundry (and the extra water is used to flush her toilet," President Macapagal-Arroyo narrated in a speech at the national convention of the Philippine Association of Water Districts.

"Can you imagine that? Our ancestor—[three years ago] she learned that he became water is very expensive," she said.

Model

Mr. Macapagal urged the administrators of the various water districts in the country to tell the story of the Olympic hopefully as it could for the unserviced water.

He lamented to cases of many residents who have suffered for years without potable water. He buys water from vendors at P500 per cubic meter, or 10 times the cost of water if the basic water connection.

Access to clean water is one of the most basic needs of all Filipinos, Mr. Macapagal said. This is why the homeland Funding on Irrigation Cleric, a massive project providing poor families free water connections. There are 160,000 households in Metro Manila which do not have water connection, although they are served by less connections.

which supply water to Metro Manila and neighboring provinces.

Close gov't

The President's water project has delivered free water to the 160,000 households, but still, much needs to be done.

She said "Revenue laws clean water and clean government. That is the best symbol or slogan. Clean water as a symbol of clean government that ordinary Filipinos await, together with you (water district officials) and us."

Are the mice playing when the cat is away?

TO SUPERVISE OFFICE
- Prevent sabotage, sabotage burglary
- Monitor daily routines and employee behavior
- Increase productivity, prevent waiting
- Monitor your cash register

TO SUPERVISE MAIDS/NEIGHBORS AT HOME
- Monitor and record your home when you're out
- Prevent and deter criminal activity

For more info, visit or call us at:
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JANUARY 200

Ministers, health experts tackle bird flu in Bangkok

THAILAND welcomes delegates to Bangkok, cited the danger zone, across

BANGKOK—An emergency bird flu meeting of Asian ministers and international health experts went ahead Wednesday, even though the Thai capital was declared a "danger zone" from the disease that has hit at least 10 countries.

The bird flu, which has swept through Asia's poultry farms and killed at least 12 people, previously had struck Thailand's countryside only. But its outbreak coming to Thai officials feeding off allegations they unfairly covered up an outbreak, Bangkok officials said the virus was detected in a fighting cock and other birds around the sprawling metropolis. Officials also announced that the disease had now been detected in about one-third of Thailand's provinces.

"There's always potential for this kind of outbreak to result in serious global pandemic, which involves not hundreds, but could kill millions of people globally," Shigeru Omi, regional director of the World Health Organization, warned.

Across Asia, millions of chickens and ducks have been killed—by the disease or in government-ordered culls aimed at containing it. China is the latest country to announce an outbreak.

The virus has jumped to people in Vietnam and Thailand. Vietnam announced two more deaths from the disease Wednesday, bringing the country's total to eight. Two others have died in Thailand. Most cases have come from contact between sick birds and many to have been young children.

Asians are shunning chicken. Alarmed fish, as a disease for the region's poultry industry and a health scare comparable to last year's global outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome. But the WHO says there's still time to prevent the virus from taking root in the human population.

"We have a window of opportunity to deal with this disease," said Dr. Klaus Stohr, project leader for influenza surveillance and outbreak response at the WHO.

Although there has been recent

Kerry wins New Hampshire primary

MANCHESTER, New Hampshire—John Kerry overpowered Howard Dean to win New Hampshire's primary, scoring a second straight campaign victory to solidify himself as the front-runner in the Democratic race that will decide who will challenge George W. Bush for the presidency.

"I ask Democrats everywhere to join us as we can defeat George W. Bush and the re-issues of yesterday," Kerry told supporters cheering for his political revival following his victory in the Iowa vote last week. He promised to "reclaim the poverty of millions other than millionaire homes of millionaires."

Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina and former Gen. Wesley Clark finished third and fourth in Tuesday's vote, but ran behind both Kerry at 39 percent and Dean at 26 percent. Sen. Joe Lieberman of Connecticut, lagging in fifth place, rejected advice from some advisers to abandon his bid.

After sweeping through coffee shops, restaurants and living rooms of Iowa and New Hampshire, the final re-election to hold talks in the meantime now move to the cold contests of a national campaign—airport lobbies and multimillion-dollar ad buys in seven states holding primary next Tuesday.

For 4, who reshaped the race with the rising late in Iowa's caucuses on Jan. 19, pledged to carry his momentum to every state. He increases the weights months of campaigning in 2004 that drew crowds in Texas's second and swept him.

"He hasn't been in the last position," Dean said of Kerry in an interview from Vermont. "We'll find out what happens."

The focus was on states could be would headed.

"I've been through a lot in the last nine days, and I have been in tough races before and have been re-elected," Kerry said. "I'm ready to lead our party to victory."

With 47 percent of precincts reporting, Kerry had 339 percent, Dean had 26 percent, Clark 12 percent, Edwards 12 percent and Lieberman 9 percent. It was a three-way finish, with Dean in the lead. Kerry is the second of Clark and Edwards.

About 200,000 voters participated in the Democratic primary, nearly eclipsing the record 175,000 that turned out in 1992 when Paul Tsongas defeated then-Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton.

A total of seven Democrats are vying for their party's nomination to run against Bush in November elections. Voter will be held around the country as contingents and to others delegates for the Democratic Party's national convention, who in all draw a presidential candidate. AP

KERRY: Another victory

2 Afghan attacks leave 1 British soldier dead

KABUL—A pair of nearly simultaneous attacks, one suicide, on British and German bases near the Afghan capital Wednesday left one British soldier dead and as many as nine other foreigners wounded, police and coalition officials said.

The attacks came during a memorial ceremony for a Canadian soldier killed in a suicide attack in Kabul just the day before. An Afghan civilian was also killed in that attack.

An ISA Tuesday, a spokesperson for the Taliban claimed it had carried out the bombings.

The British soldier was killed near the base in Kabul, said Canadian Maj. Gen. Andrew Leslie, deputy commander of the security force, speaking at the end of the memorial service at the Canadian base.

"Initial reports indicate that one of our British comrades lost his life and three have been wounded," he said, adding that another explosive device was detonated outside the main German base.

A spokesperson for the Peacekeeping force, Lt. Col. Jenny Langer, said one British soldier died after a car bomb hit a British patrol at about 11 a.m. local time (0630 GMT). In London, the British Ministry of Defense said another four were wounded.

There were no reports of civilian casualties.

Just east of Kabul near the German peacekeepers' base, a suicide bomber in a taxi detonated an explosion that injured five foreigners, said Ghulam Dastagir, a local police chief.

International troops and Afghan soldiers cordoned off the scene of the attack on the British patrol, on Jalalabad Road, about 2 km from the Germans' base. From nearby, two columns of smoke could be seen—apparently Land Rovers that are used by British troops.

The blast blew out the windows of a bulletin house nearby, sending people scurrying from the debris, said Zulqai, 28, a worker there who said he heard explosions and saw some. He said he had seen three injured foreigners and two Afghans transported to nearby clinics.

"It was a very strong sound," Zulqai said.

Sheikh Fidaie Latif, who claims to speak for the Taliban, said his group had carried out the attacks. AP

Car bomb kills 4 in Baghdad

BAGHDAD—A car bomb exploded Wednesday in front of a hotel frequented by Westerners, killing at least four people, witnesses and coalition officials said. The blast went off as day after six US soldiers were killed in a pair of roadside bombings.

A fourth US force man was among the dead at the Hakem hotel in Baghdad, according to employees of the three-story building in the city's residential district.

The attack occurred as a two-member UN team arrived in Baghdad to assess security for an electoral team. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said Tuesday he would send the electoral team to the United States to guarantee its safety.

It is unclear the team will try to determine whether time is safe enough and adequately organized to hold early elections, an issue at the core of a dispute between the US-led coalition administration and Iraq's majority Shiites over forming a new government.

The United States has cited the ongoing violence in ignoring against demands by Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani of elections that be directly elected by a provisional legislature, who later one will select a government to take power by July 1.

Instead, Washington wants the lawmakers chosen to 18 regional caucuses.

Annan said he believed the United Nations could play "a constructive role" in helping to break the impasse and finding other matters the choosing a new long leadership.

Many Muslim leaders have said Al-Sistani wants to hear alternatives to the caucus plan of the 100 many says it's not feasible to hold elections by the end of June.

However the US position has been derailed by the continuing violence, much of it blamed on insurgents loyal to Saddam Hussein.

The blast Wednesday occurred in front of the hotel in the upscale Baghdad neighborhood of Karrada. In addition to the four dead, at least 17 people were reported injured.

Parts of the hotel's concrete walls were blown away, leaving gaping holes and decorating the interior. Walls that remained were blackened.

Two other buildings nearby were badly damaged—one housing policemen assigned to a precinct station on the site, and the other a company that sells fire extinguishers. AP

Blair braces for result of inquiry into Kelly's death

LONDON—A judge has cleared British Prime Minister Tony Blair of dishonorable behavior in the death of a British expert on Iraqi weapons, a newspaper reported Wednesday, citing what it called leaked details of the family-panelled verdict.

Lord Hutton, a senior appeals judge, was to publish his findings Wednesday on the inquiry into the circumstances leading to the apparent suicide last July of weapons inspector David Kelly, who was at the center of a controversy over the war in Iraq. Kelly was identified as the source for a British Broadcasting Corp. report claiming the government hyped the threat from Iraqi weapons to win backing for the war.

Alleged leaks of Hutton's findings, reported by The Sun newspaper, say he has cleared Blair of any dishonorable conduct, exonerated Blair's former aide Alastair Campbell, and harshly criticized the BBC. But until Hutton makes his findings public Wednesday afternoon, none of this could be confirmed.

The government said it was not responsible for any leaks to The Sun.

Blair and the other principals in the case received their copies of Hutton's lengthy report on Tuesday. The prime minister planned to address The House of Commons and take questions on Wednesday afternoon, hoping to reposition which has already seemed blood lying.

The episode has drawn great attention to the credibility of Blair, Defense Secretary Geoff Hoon, senior government officials and the BBC.

Hutton's hearings, holding many of largest and legislation, wrangled the country, which remains deeply divided about Blair's decision to join U.S.-led attack on Iraq.

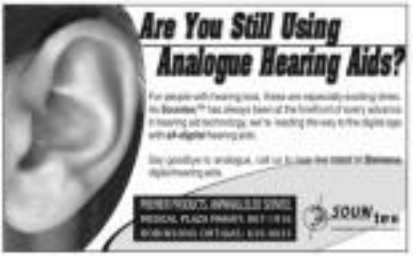
Blair's opponents, inside and outside the government, hope it will shatter the prime minister's reputation for being—in his own said—"[a] straight guy."

Kelly apparently killed himself on July 17 with his left wrist slashed, within days of being publicly identified by officials as the anonymous source of a BBC news report which accused the government of "sexing up" an intelligence dossier on Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction. The news report had set off a furious battle between the broadcaster and the government.

The retired chief UN weapons inspector David Kay said last week that he concluded that Saddam Hussein had no such weapons—an opinion that now the basis of Blair's case for war.

For the prime minister, it's the second half of an agonizing week. On Tuesday his government narrowly defeated a rebellion within his Labor Party over rules being considered to limit asylum, a key government legislative initiative.

Hutton pored over documents, emails, official minutes and memos from the personal diary of Campbell, Blair's former communications director, which provided extraordinary insights into the interplay of politics and politics at the highest level. AP



WorldBriefs

Arrest of Mirzanto

BEIJING—[illegible] was arrested Wednesday for public swearing after [illegible] Hollywood's former military chief [illegible] years ago over the violence that engulfed the nation in 1998. Prosecutors are seeking an international arrest warrant for Mirzanto, and Prosecutor General Jung Jabbo Abraham alleged last week that [illegible] Mirzanto's alleged link made that [illegible] political reasons. Without the warrant, Mirzanto can live a relatively [illegible]. Prosecutors said Wednesday Indonesia's [illegible] talks that case for [illegible]. AP

US winter storm

NEW YORK—A storm carrying the threat of heavy snow for the northeastern United States scored a wide swath of [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] disrupting [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

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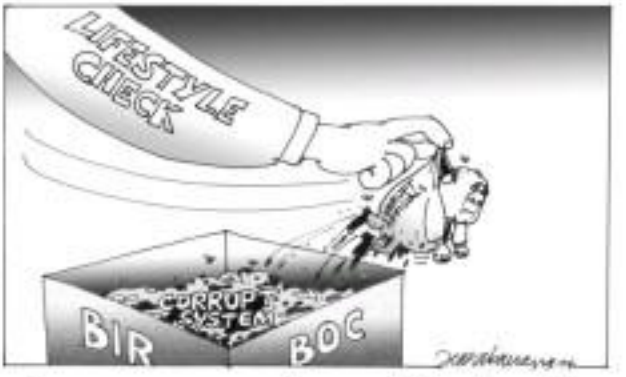

Deadly threat

THE THREAT of bird flu is lapping at our shores, with robust Asian economies reporting deaths from the virus that has jumped from fowl to humans at a pace worrisome to the World Health Organization. As is anything for the most part yet to be satisfactorily explained by authorities, the general public is left to rely on hearsay pronouncements—for example, that Philippine fowl, particularly chicken, is safe for consumption. This is all very well, at least for those households who choose chicken as their staple dish and who can afford to do so, and, so well, the considerable portion of the population that raises poultry as livelihood and that stands to lose everything is, quite literally, one fell swoop. But for how long?

EDITORIALS

Even in the last decade, scientists warned that the indiscriminate use of antibiotics and other drugs has resulted in virus mutations resistant to the strongest medications. The warning has since provided fodder for science-fiction thrillers, except that there is nothing thrilling or fictional in the modern-day diseases that have taken claimed human casualties in disturbing numbers. A case, so to speak, of life imitating celluloid.

The governments of countries with reported cases of bird flu—Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Pakistan, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam—have ordered the culling of millions of chickens infected by the virus. Global media have recorded and broadcast to all points of the planet not only reports but also photographs and footage of slaughter which, although presumably intended to show swift implementation of health measures, somehow portray humanity in pain—and a not insignificant tinge of savagery. (But this is hardly new. Years after the cruel cow disease hit England in the 1990s and Prime Minister Tony Blair's order to slaughter resulted in the destruction of both infected and healthy cattle, a dramatic picture of a dead cow being hoisted by crane from a mountain of carcasses remains etched in the memory. And only recently came this chilling photograph from China, parts of which experienced a brief resurgence of SARS: of a worker with one foot pinning down a cornered civet cat, poised to deliver the death blow.)

The latest here is that migratory and wild birds are not to blame for the virus' development as "very hardy" and able to travel "very easily in the air and over great distances." Here is an Agence France Presse report on the matter: "Scientists suggest that migrating birds [taking the East Asian flyway] could have introduced the virus in their droppings or passed it on to domesticated birds during stop-offs in their winter journeys south for the warm weather and summer flights north."

On top of all these, of course, is the prevailing "flu weather," with sudden heat interspersed between bursts of cold. The fear is that bird flu could link with the regular flu to produce a mutation. Never then what is now known.

We hotter fears for the long haul. The prognosis appears to be that things will get worse before they get better.

But no comfort

AND on home ground, where the situation is generally catch-as-catch-can, where the budget for health is a fraction of that for the military, and where authorities often invoke prayer as a solution to man-made problems, the situation looks less than comforting.

To be sure, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources—itself under fire from environmentalists and Mindoro folk for its laid-back stance vis-à-vis a dire cruise ship that ran aground on the protected Apo Menor Reef near to it than a month ago—has banned the entry of pet birds from countries on the danger list and ordered the "surveillance" of areas where migratory birds congregate. It has yet to be seen what these bird-watching directives will result in, although if the case of the BW Island Explorer threatening to damage the marine sanctuary off Sablayan, Mindoro Occidental, is any indication, we shouldn't hold our breath.

But the case of the P16-million chicken shipment smuggled last week through the port of Batangas shows the quality of the government's efforts—if there is any—to safeguard Philippine borders against bird flu. The shipment came from the United States and Canada via Taiwan, one of the countries with known cases of the virus. Nothing much is known about the seven customs officials responsible for the release of the shipment—not even their names.

Lawyer answers questions on FPJ's citizenship

LAST Monday, Jan. 20, I posed some questions here to clarify issues on the controversy over the citizenship of Fernando Poe Jr. Fernando Am. member Fredi Cuzo, a former colleague (grayhead), fired some replies to those questions (for which I am grateful. For the benefit of readers I scan him and re-proffered it to me. I am quoting his e-mailer for this item.

"Allow me to answer the questions on FPJ's citizenship/naturalization (as I see it, that is):

"1. That Poe Sr. is not a Filipino but a Spaniard and the answer is: Under the Treaty of Paris and the Philippine Bill of 1902 (enacted Philippine citizenship) on Lawrence Poe, father of Allan Fernando Poe? The answer is that is the affirmative. The Treaty of Paris of 1898 provides in Article IX that *the civil rights and political status of the native inhabitants of the territories ceded to the United States shall be determined by the Congress.*" Pursuant to the provisions stated in the United States shall be determined by the Congress." Pursuant to the provisions stated in the United States Congress, it states in Section 4 that all inhabitants of the Philippine islands continuing to reside therein who were Spanish subjects on the 11th day of April 1899, and who remained in such residence on the 11th day of October following such ratification, shall become citizens thereof unless they elected to preserve their allegiance to Spain. They might have sovereignty placed on their Spanish citizenship in some documents, but this did not affect the efforts of the cited laws on March 1899 to declare Filipino Spanish in fact to their nationhood as current Filipinos.

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

"2. It is equal to the purported marriage of Allan Poe with its cousin Paulita Gomez, this too answer to this has already been resolved in connection with Mr. Ronnie Monsayac. There simply was no premarital document showing that marriage, as compared or forged documents.

"3. Dean prosecutors have to prove the genuineness of Gomez's complaint for bigamy? The same answer: it is the preceding paragraph. It shall be added that if said charges of bigamy were true, there would have been a resolution on the merits on the legality of the first and second marriages under Article 40 of the Family Code of 1988 (in the matter of the judicial declaration of nullity of a previous marriage). Prosecutors failed to produce any document respecting this case. Mr. Cruz is right that a mere complaint for bigamy does not make the marriage legal unless and until the allegations do not make the same true.

"4. It is true that if Allan Poe were a Filipino and his marriage to Susan was legal, then FPJ is a legitimate child and his father, the citizenship of Susan Poe (Quintos) would not affect the presumption of legitimacy to a child. Under the Spanish Civil Code enforced during the time of the child shall be presumed legitimate although the mother may have declared against his legitimacy also, the conclusive presumption of the status of legitimate children. In fact, even baptismal evidence is competent to establish this.

"5. That FPJ is birth certificate shows that he was born to a Spanish father and declared to be still illegitimate. Under the marriage legislation the illegitimate? This is correct. legitimation clarifies place by the subsequent marriage between the parents and that legitimation takes effect from the time of the child's birth. This rule has been set to protect the child who is innocent. Children who were legitimated by subsequent marriage shall enjoy the same rights as legitimate children, it may be added in this connection that the law of Article 40 FC before the second marriage of the parents did not confer him illegitimate, neither did he follow the citizenship of his nationals mother. The law is already mentioned. There is no remaining law regulating the mother's citizenship of a child born out of wedlock.

"Mr. Cruz alludes to a ruling here in the RD vs. Dep Exec case (vol. 20, Phil. Reports) but does not say it is inapplicable. Ong Teong was born of a Filipino mother and a Chinese father without a subsequent marriage validating their union. In the case of RD, he was born of a Filipino father and a subsequent marriage legitimizing the union of RD. Besides, RD also was born on Aug. 20, 1950 after the 1935 Constitution is entered section that declaration in Article II of said Constitution is in order to be a citizen of the Philippines, i.e. Those whose fathers are citizens of the Philippines." But FPJ is a natural born Filipino citizen as obvious because he did not have to execute any act to acquire or perfect his citizenship.

"Finally, a point that should not be ignored is the fact of the place of birth of RD: the Philippines. Although acts abandoned, the principle of jus soli, citizenship by place of birth, was the one followed in some cases up to the 1935 Constitution. Cases in connection to the cases of Tecso vs. Tan Dian (Feb. 3, 1948) and Gallofin vs. Gotchin (June 27, 1946). Of course, the principle of jus sanguinis, citizenship by descent, is now the accepted principle. It is commendable that with RD, who was born in 1939, these two principles coincided, resulted in his case."

Collecting things

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I CONFESS to ABC's "Bandidos" late with (what am I say, I had my daughter to persuade me to give up shopping for nobels here) and she hopes was. I watched it enough, not patient for collecting things. The three fourand various people who had collected things throughout the years: comics, soft-drink cans, "Star Wars" memorabilia, and so on. I was there because I had collected vinyl albums, quite apart from music DVDs, and the more we went to him most of them had gotten from collections. That was simply because I had never seen behind me. I was the same criteria there.

I became by any means a dedicated collector of vinyl, as even a decent one. For seven odd years, I had collected vinyl because vinyl records are expensive, particularly for godawful stuff on L who have only so many to keep body and soul together. They said now. They were penniless days but also wonderful ones when the body was young and the mind was other affections. I say that because it's known to listen to music with the aid of illusion, something I've had just to do now that I'm not completely. He goes on in the amount of time, moving round and round and round in the vinyl years, to now. Mas bad part is that the first time I heard this song was here, when else: a vinyl record.)

I do know people whose collection dates back to the grandparents of photograph albums, through LP, through tape, through CD, and the shirt kind that plays a few songs—remote controls. And, still, I do know those people who have begun collecting during the time of Frank Sinatra and Glen Parsley or the Beatles. Mine is just a mesmerizing of records partly bought, partly received and partly found.

But I did feel the pain some cashing in when I dusted off some records from the carriage here that for in a corner of the living room to bring to the studio, as my boss requested. The records were all from the 1980s and 1990s: by artists Dires, a couple of albums by Billie Holiday, one solo a Double Album, and "Cool Blow the Child," made with Columbia, and the other van Halen's last recording, which simply says "Billy Holiday", the songs with Ray Eli, and like the bands, Gordie Lesley playing with Andre Previn, the New Minnesota singing Yuppy songs ("Balitao"). John Williams' fine guitar, not the movie scores) playing "Concerto de Aranjuez." Claude Bolling playing Duke Ellington tunes, and several classical albums, including Mozart's "Requiem."

The Dires Dires and the Billie Holiday double album I bought in the United States, Holiday's last recording a gesture in marriage gave me, the best albums and the Gordie Lesley bought here, and most of the classical albums I bought in Moscow. The Russian albums will spread the Gordie set up. The vinyl was thin and breaks but played just as well on the turntable. You just had to be a little more careful in putting the needle on the right track and angle to draw to silence any popular grooves with too much pressure. I sold my copy to "Breakfast" the Russian records sold for a song, running only a few bucks. Back into the days when the people's democratic republic of a presumably soulless country did have a game now, had time for the love of the market, or people, who have come from to study from there. In that exchange are for the heroes. My boss asked me why I didn't buy those records wholesale. I said I did.

The records I brought in (CDs) in exchange for the older ones are the latest of them, new releases of old records. Like the Billie Holiday record, but also did not come out to me, even little, in sound. I have not done and still remember the exact album names used to play them when they were teenagers, but none of them grew up on CD. I myself would say for, when he was considering what kind of movies these vinyl records had. He thought, they were so, other than of later days.

My boss asked why I still kept those records, or if I still listened to them. Then asked me as well as to whether I'd give those who had inherited a collection from their grandparents which are gathering dust in a corner or closet or so.

The answer to the first was easy: I kept the vinyl records for the same reason I kept the CDs. They were superior to CD. CD, that Philips invention that was supposed to be perfect, turned out to be less than so. Indeed, it turned out to be inferior to vinyl. I could relate to any amateur audiophile will tell you. That's the reason they have not abandoned vinyl altogether, like the digital-to-analog converters (DAC), just to make CDs sound like vinyl. Sony now releases high-definition CDs, and someone told me no CDs he bought can approach the sound of the old records. They express nirvana comes from saying to make CDs sound like vinyl. What's the difference? Well, you won't know it until you hear it. But you'll be so much sooner, richer and more likable. CD is more cheap, handy and portable.

My self-styled audiophile who would like to try them out or sorts, too. You have to have small and patience. Vinyl needs lots of manoeuvrance, you have to keep cleaning it because it easily develops noise. Needles of course you have to keep changing. Records of course you have to keep cleaning. Real audiophiles do, that makes liquid into the record and enzymes it before you play it, because of an ordinary materials. It's just maintenance. Cleaning it cannot well did is all very therapeutic for it's also time-consuming. Come to think of it, maybe I still like vinyl cleaning (and listening, something I've not done in some time) records again. I need to relax in the art of patience.

But whether you're going to pick up the habit or not, you must know the body who would like to have these can you throw something away, think again. Maybe you're throwing gold away. Or something that'll get you a headache or two.

A college degree as minimum qualification?

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

OBVIOUSLY there's a direct relationship between the devaluation movements of the peso vis-à-vis the dollar and the escalation of expenses presidential candidates undergo. As Sarmiento dancing (it's a not being truthful) Harold here the peso and the stock market plunged to a all-time low last November when PDI declared that he was available to presidential candidate. Then again, that's true, what the heck, Harold (or Sarmiento richard) is despicable title for not being a presidential candidate, the peso plunged to almost P56 to the dollar, which is not the all-time low. There's four indicators that businessmen consider and his creation of government coffers, are not denied by the billions that were said to be guaranteed to stuff by SSS and GSIS, such as the merger of Philam and Equitable Bank, the bailout of Bilibid Conservation and the purchase of 100 thousand toy trucks that no, Israel stuck to forgo till the end, voting not to open that second envelope in the sequestration trial.

• • •

Sen. Augustus Fournier made a last-minute statement on Israel's request, ruling as virtually nonsense any attempt to put down GMA on the eve of the elections. Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, who is also a lawyer, Fournier concluded that while policy appointees have to have a CPA height to qualify, practitioners don't have to fill out health questionnaires. On true, of course, referring to GMA's "official" health report.

Speaking of height, President Mo signed into recently added why she appointed Balderas-secretary Dulce Saturnino, a career official, to succeed Balderas. Quite a Dulce indeed, but on the other hand she would name a policeman as a way to

• • •

"What reserve standing reserve is that an PFI president could be a report of the Reserve, the reserve officer corps, the reserve force, the reserve force, the reserve force

A heroine for all seasons

LETTERS

AFTER HEARING the astute remarks by Joanne T. Box, titled "A throne of roses: I put it plainly," (which appeared in the Nov 11, 2003 issue of the Inquirer), I was deeply touched because this multi-awarded teacher here in Ecuador was lauded like Mama Pasquin.

The boxing hero was met with a loud deafening silence of welcome when he got back to the country, honored with a special audience by President Municipal Arroyo, and awarded the Gawad sa Kaunlad Medal of Honor.

And to think that she was chosen the best teacher from among 4,000 teachers adjudged the best from all over the world. For this, the Lincoln Laboratory, Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston, USA named a minor planet (between Mars and Jupiter), planet Bayo, a sun kind of metal.

In 1977, she won the Maybank Foundation Award. In 1988, she was chosen as one of the Outstanding Young Filipinos. In 2002, she won the land Excellence in Teaching award held in Louisville, Kentucky, USA and many other national and international awards.

Notwithstanding these honors and awards, it seems our government has little appreciation, if at all, of her and of her achievements. Pls wonder some of our intellectually supported men and women have conferred to other countries. How they are financially secure and mentally lucid.

Bayo, an academician, endures a journey unmuch than an entire culture to help themselves in resolving their threats. We are proud of her. She are produce many more Bayos. We are proud of her and this is our heroine.

—GUILLERMO R. SLOSSE,
Asturias, Cebu

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Movies as social capital

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

Thinking back now, the films' contents really don't tell; maybe 20 or 30 years or more, but because they were poorly kept, the film quality resulted to deteriorate rapidly.

Today we don't see those films anymore on television. The video stores like Astrovision, Video Central, Glenda One and Viva also faced, only on the 1970s, and again, some of them, even if only 10 or 20 years old, are already showing signs of wear and tear. You'll also see some of the older films have English or Tagalog subtitles, suggesting that there are international versions that have been erased.

I never got to see "Zombengga" and was so intrigued by the clips they featured on Monday night's newscasts. It was apparently a grand production, filmed on location in Pinatubo. There were stars, and an underwater scene supposing romance. There was a quick video clip boasting that the movie had a "matinee cast," said the TV commentators and there were plans to have the Tanang language was used.

As an anthropologist, I would be intrigued to see what the early Ilue was, how the Maellano were depicted, what romantic scenes meant then, even the kind of Tagalog used then.

Films offer much more, of course, than material for academic analysis. A film is considered a movie when it is able to capture our humanity in a way that a materials must. A few weeks back I was able to catch a few minutes of a 1970s film—I'm afraid I don't have the exact title, but it was something like "Ito'ng mga anak mong" —about young people of that era, and their problems with parental authority, with drugs and sex. The film belies the myth we've created about a glorious past, when the young were "pure" and innocent.

I liked the recent film "Dekada '70," but if you really want to get a feel of the human drama surrounding the martial-law struggles, nothing beats "Bonifacio, I..." released in 1984 shortly after the assassination of Ninoy Aquino. And to understand why there was so much social ferment then (and now), you'd have to go to earlier films from the 1950s like "Markang Bakal" or "Anak ng Kumintang," depicting the heart-wrenching poverty of that era. Again, the film reminds us that many of our social problems today, from urban poor slums to prostitution, persist both in time.

Many of our best films were powerful social commentaries. "Sinaktan ng Panahon" (the produced around the time of Ninoy Aquino's assassination, is a film that continues to be relevant, with its message that both lasting peace is not as a response to physical illness but to social isolation, as political and cultural estrangement. These days, sexuality many of us have nothing left but a hope for miracles.

"Tatsulok" (a "Pagsisi Bahay" is another gem, showing how an adolescent male (a much younger Christopher de Leon) grapples with social injustices in a small town. And then there are Peque Gallaga's "Oro, Plata, Mata" and "Camera Cena Rosa, Pusong Gato Ngiyo," epic films that bring to life the Spanish colonial period and the World War.

Not everything has to be serious stuff. Even with the mindless slapstick genre of our comedies showed an irreverent side to the Filipino authority figures were ridiculed, the class structure being the police, politicians and priests.

Thankfully, many of the lesser films from the 1970s and 1980s are still shown on cable, but many good films are still missing, especially those films and documentaries. How many of you have seen "Batang Lansihan ng Bayo" "Batang Lansihan ng Mona Bagge?" There's a documentary from Kathy Jocson, "Pacific Video"? I can imagine some readers asking: The last a clue many Filipinos have not, and will never see the world-class documentaries of the likes of Raffy Tiltchok and Nick Deocampo. And I suspect their documentaries are better endowed, and appreciated, in the Iranian Shiraz and Europe than here at home.

About two weeks ago, I went to several video shops to check what Filipino films they had on VCD and DVD. I got only blank looks. Even the video clerks can't climbed off the titles of classics. In the end, after doing my own search through several dozen titles (mostly crime and cheesy love), I found one classic "Brutal Iyang Lima Gema," where Bea Aubrey plays a nurse about to leave to work in the Middle East; (still about love history appears itself). Her plans go awry when her brother a shot dead over a $1 military loan. It's a $2. The most powerful scene had Aubrey confronting James (an ilue ambusher who had dragged off the incident in an accidental shooting. "Kabayan," she screamed when she officials explained what he'd had lived, "is yan a pig."

It's telling how that line has been revived, now lampooned in social-by pig-lords. That all was made knowing very well that powerful filmmakers remain deeply etched in our collective consciousness. But I wonder how many younger Filipinos know that the line was inspired by real incidents of land shootings around the US bases. Inevitably, how officials would heavily-fly the accident back to the United States and characterize that the shooting had been an accident, that the victim had been murdered for a pig.

More than a source of entertainment, appreciating our films is recognizing how they change, even if sometimes in a glacial-slow or unacknowledged way, a nation's credit, and schools, icons, aspirations and triumph. Films are arguably part of our social capital that need to be preserved with care and nurtured, with pride across generations.

Across the NATION

Assistant Editor Tony Burgonio

Group raises doubts on Bulacan's fund spending

CITY OF MALOLOS—A non-government organization said the Bulacan provincial government's "questionable creative" budget allocation of P600 million from the office of Governor Josefina dela Cruz's Special Education Fund (SEF).

The Movement for Responsible Enterprise (Share), in a statement, said it discovered that Gov. Josefina dela Cruz spent more than P96.3 million for her "personal staff" last year, which was more than the P72.6 million for the sports in 2002.

The group also revealed the budget increase allocated to the staff of Gov. Gov. Josefina Flamenco, in the proposed budget for the 2004 P10.1 million more than 2003 P13.6 million allotment."

The Governor tried to get Jose in Gonzalez comment to March allegations but was informed that her office was closed for the purpose citing an official statement in about 5:30 p.m. Wednesday.

Dr. Alfonso de la Rosa, Flamenco's chief of staff, said the matter was already raised and answered earlier. He said they were wondering why the issue was being revived at this time.

While he admitted such an increase in their budget last year, De la Rosa said increases in 2004 were justified by the office's efforts of the private-school members.

He said the increase went to their staff members' salaries, maintenance and other operating expenses, communication and other needs, transportation, repair and maintenance, and procurement of supplies.

"Anybody who questions how the money was spent can check at the records of the [provincial] treasurer's office to see where the exact single creation of the budget went," he follows said.

He said last year's budget was not fully spent and the remaining amount was returned to the general fund of the provincial government.

He said this is to be political reasons and all issues raised against the Bulacan officials were "politically motivated."

Share said De la Rosa's budget allocations seemed "to favor personal staff and non-office expenditures over more essential expenses."

As example, it said, was the 2003 allocation for the repair of provincial roads of "only P13.5 million." Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Pagdanganan exempts 1,000 ha of Floirendo land from CARP

By Norman Bordadora

THE DEPARTMENT of Agrarian Reform last month exempted from land reform at least 1,000 hectares belonging to four agricultural corporations of businessman Antonio Floirendo in Davao del Norte.

The parcels of land that have been exempted by the DAR from the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program were the subject of land disputes that have been previously decided in favor of farmers in the area.

Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan set aside the previous decisions on the four cases of land disputes and granted the Floirendo estate's appeals on Dec. 16.

Records gathered from the DAR by the Philippine Agrarian Reform and Rural Development Services (PARRDS) showed that the four reversed decisions including those affirmed with the Malacañan by the Philippine Movement Against Poverty in ruling out in the DAR grounds in favor of Cor.

Pagdanganan's Davao Order 04-03-01 set aside the April 24, 2002 decision by then Agrarian Reform Secretary Hernani Braganza ordering the segregation for land reform of 50.66 hectares of the Floirendo-owned banana plantation in Tagum, Davao del Norte.

One of the grounds of Tadeco in its appeal, dated June 3, 2002, was that the hectares of the disputed property was planted to bamboo instead of bananas and is actually a second growth area with an 18 percent slope.

Mono could thus verify the 18 percent slope when no representative from the Davao arrived at the site to inspect whether or not the slope was indeed 18 percent or more," said Dalde delos Reyes, one of the farmer agrarian reform beneficiaries of the Tadeco cooperative.

The Department Dec. 10 also ruled in favor of the Davao Fruit Processing Corp., whose almost 130 hectares in Barangay Manay Cogon, Davao del Norte have been exempted from the CARP by virtue of the Davao's Dec. 18 decision. The Pandan Integr Co. Inc., more than 300 hectares in Barangay Tambo, Panabo town; and Hijo Plantation, more than 300 hectares in Barangay Tibungol, also in Panabo town.

"The Davao del Norte office did the procedures necessary in coming up with their decisions," said Dalde Cruz.

In contrast, Dr. Eddie said, the decisions of the various levels of DAR offices in Davao del Norte and Mindanao in favor of farmers' beneficiaries were based on on-the-ground investigation and interviews applicable to the Davao-headed by previous agrarian reform officials.

Inside Gwen Ibe four weekends in the Floirendo estate in Davao del Norte, the Davao under Pagdanganan also ordered on Dec. 16 the further development for resident-tied purposes of the Malalag Realty Inc. property in Malalag, Davao del Norte, which is owned by Floirendo's daughter Gwen Ibe.

Reggie Mendoza, head of the farmers' group Unoba, said that Pagdanganan stands out as the only secretary who approved 136 cases involving conversion applications in six months from January to June 2003 and "consistently decided in favor of land owners in some of the biggest and controversial."

LONG HOURS

Relatives of fishermen who went missing in an oil tanker sinking wave for their boats off the shores of La Union and Pangasinan gather at the gates of the Philippine Navy in La Union to await word on the fishermen.

ROUNDUP

Aerofest in Clark

CLARK SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE—Although it's almost impossible for the first Clark International Aerosports Festival on Feb. 5 to 8. This is the pleasure scene for the international but no business festival, which is a non-aviation event for kids and friends. Indeed that, like the former, festival shall take new offerings in the Diamond PY-TO, a plane with wooden wings and two open cockpits. The second festival being held this [illegible] said. The festival would also feature light aircraft from the Philippine Flying Association, ultra-light aircraft event, skydiving exhibitions, helicopter rides, aerobatic flights, aircraft exhibitions, maintenance and overhaul, airport passenger terminal facilities, and aviation [illegible]. Activities [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

INQUIRER Southern Luzon
Allen Jan Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Florrie G. Salvinera

Foreign couple helps abused children

By Madonna T. Virola
Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro

THEY could well be staying elsewhere, earning a fortune and enjoying the luxuries of the First World, but Danish-American couple Lars and Monica Jorgensen realized life would be more worthwhile if they spent it pursuing the rights of children and motivating them to pursue their dreams.

They could just be eyeing the beautiful beaches of Puerto Galera, like other foreigners, but Lars, 43, and Monica, 39, instead saw the children abused by adults and needing special support.

Last week, Lars, along with other advocates of children's rights, were alarmed what cases of children in Puerto Galera, accompanied by their teachers, filed sexual abuse complaints with the Department of Social Work and Development in Puerto Galera.

Jorgensen said the children are most vulnerable and not ready to act about their difficult circumstances. That is why the filing of the cases against people pedophiles has alarmed him.

The problem of pedophilia has not disappeared, he said, "It's still here and more intensive and intermittent campaigns need to be conducted," he said.

Motivation

Lars was teaching English and simultaneously learning Chinese in Taiwan before he came to the Philippines.

When he and American wife Monica came to Manila in 1998 for a vacation, they went to Puerto Galera, which has earned a good reputation among tourists.

They felt uneasy seeing the street children of Manila in poor conditions, risking their lives and exposed to a negative environment. "We were motivated by being raised with the situation of the children, their rights violated."

In Puerto Galera, they saw cases of pedophilia that needed to be addressed. The Jorgensens addressed. "We saw them on the beach, some were staying in cottages. They were 7-12 year old boys."

They thought that anger was not enough and that they had to do something more concrete and responsive.

Aside from the critical issues to be addressed, the Jorgensens also found Filipinos extremely hospitable and friendly. "So we also stayed. We found great cultivation in our work," said Lars.

Thus, the idea of putting up a shelter for street children was born. A former canteen was donated on the Jorgensen property.

THE ETERNAL? Canoe in Puerto Galera houses abused children for rehabilitation.

ONE of the participants in the art workshop.

THE STREET CHILDREN participate in summer camps and creative workshops for therapy.

Stairway

In 1995, the first step from ideation has 1,000 was done in the concert tours.

The word "stairway" was used as inducive an upward direction in developing. The NGO started by helping out street children in Manila in 1996.

The street children would participate in summer camps and creative workshops for therapy in Cubao in Quezon City and other areas. The boys had been abused by guys and given P500 or sometimes, nothing. Even the love food promised them was not given, they claimed.

"We could not run them with the girls," said Arellano, one of IPT's social workers. "They open up better when talking with the same gender."

IPT in Puerto Galera.

In 1994, a residential program, which houses abused boys, was put up. The boys came from Luzon, Cebu in Manila.

During the first four years of working for the street children, the Jorgensens were using their personal funds, which came from earnings in Taiwan where they worked for 3-4 months a year to pursue their desire to help poor children.

"It was a lot of hard work," Lars recalled.

In 1999, the non-governmental organization received a grant from the Danish government, which lasted for seven years. In dividends and some funding agencies from Germany and Canada also responded to the needs of IPT.

The Jorgensens realized the need to address the trauma, guilt, shame and confusion the children were going through as he worked with the street children.

With these experiences, children had very little program to the Jorgensens used the technical dramas, storytelling and others to deal with their traumas.

An orientation toolkit is also used. Through a two-and-a-half-day training workshop the facilitators were motivated to speak up.

Relief

All of the street children were handed on drugs, said Lars. In Puerto Galera, the children are easy to be lured to them.

Currently, there are 30 boys, ages 14-17, including the youth (18-22 years old), housed in IPT.

IPT has conducted 14 workshops on the Convention on the Rights of the Child/Child Sexual Abuse Prevention, which Lars said is very important, because the topic of sexual abuse has become taboo in society.

IPT also has 30 volunteers public high schools in Puerto Galera and four in public elementary schools and colleges.

Two years ago, 29 teachers were trained by the Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Sexual Abuse, a Manila-based NGO.

Thereafter, IPT coordinated with Upmigos, a multi-sectoral group in Puerto Galera, which has committed against women and children, but the coordination didn't last long.

IPT continued to explore other networks and worked on its connections.

In the coming days, IPT, in partnership with the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office, will train teachers and barangay officials on child abuse, "to create a protection of sexual abuse to address pedophilia."

With their humanitarian work, the presence of the Jorgensens in Puerto Galera is a relief.

Quezon worker risks life for 'lambanog'

By Dalin T. Mallorca
Tayabas, Quezon

THE "MAMAGANGAHIT" or the agile coconut sap collector for the production of "lambanog" (distilled coconut wine) could easily outdo it in the short list of extreme ways of earning a living.

But for Rolando Rubiales, 50, who resides in Lopez Jr., the mere tall coconut trees and bamboo himself as he crosses bamboo bridges that connect the coconut could be to collect the sap. One job is not being overconfident.

"This is the only work I know since I was 17. This is the job that all my four sons have also learned. Yes, there is risk and danger but it's an honest job," Rubiales said.

Risky and dangerous are a glaring reality for this 64-foot man, after one of his sons fell to his death while following his footsteps in Magsipay, Lopez.

Rubiales also has his own gruesome experience of two falls which he survived.

"The bamboo cracked and split midway while I was climbing the bridge. Luckily, I landed directly on a soft moist spot below. I was hospitalized for almost a month," he recalled.

There's also the numerous times break with death after the bamboo bridge suddenly snapped and left him dangling in whatever he could hold on to until he regained back safely to the top.

Abe Padrones, Mother Dilicery plant supervisor, disclosed that all the "mamagangahit" are Rubiales's and listed for every business enrollment.

"Because of the dangerous nature of their work, all the 'mamagangahit' have been recipients of insurance/enrollment incentives from the company," he said. "All remained in a negative environment, "We were motivated by being raised with the situation of the children, their rights violated."

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ROLANDO Rubiales, the oldest of the present breed of 'mamagangahit' in Tayabas, Quezon, prepares to climb a coconut tree to collect the sap.

work-related injuries are shouldered by the distillery owner."

"And as they overpower from their injury, the company idea of him free administrative allowance till they fully recover and start working again," he added.

Rubiales explained that when the company employs a "mamagangahit," the worker immediately gives a loaning allowance as he could construct his shelter inside the coconut plantation, usually near the areas assigned to him.

"It's given free by the company. It's now up to the worker to improve the structures," he said.

From the break of the early morning out, Rubiales, the oldest among the 10 sap-collectors in Mallca Jr distillery, would trek toward his area to start the day's work by climbing a single bamboo ladder. He used the 24 bamboo coconut plantation.

Each one of the "mamagangahit" carries on his back a stainless steel container made of wooden barrels.

A sharp knife for pruning the coconut flowers is also attached to his waist.

When a "mamagangahit" climbs a tree in one corner of his assigned area in the morning, he makes his descent to another tree every day after gathering all the morning sap (tuba) from the "tuba" or bamboo container that collects the sap dripping.

In the afternoon, he will repeat the same trees and bamboo bridge crossing, but this time only to do the pruning.

Rubiales is assigned to work on a total of 60 trees.

Under the old agreement, every five-gallon container of coconut sap is paid P45.

"But the company introduced a sharing agreement wherein the worker now receives more than P56 per container. The sharing depends on the total producing production of the day," Padrones explained.

While the laborer toils on the job, Rubiales said, most of them only make P2,000 to P4,000 a month.

"The income is not good either, it's true, but it is still okay. There are lots of benefits the tuba makes the plantation. One has just to go around and gather," he said.

"Sometimes, we can ask for a free bottle of fresh lambanog, especially when it is cold. To make us warm," he said in jest.

In recognition of the important role of the "mamagangahit" in lambanog production, Mallca Jr distillery launched through a colored sketch of his job, in the box and the backside of the label of the bottle of the liquor which is being exported.

Basmati rice finds way to Albay

By Joyce Mojillano
Polangui, Albay

BASMATI, said to be one of the world's most aromatic rice varieties, is now planted in the Bicol region and has started to capture the discriminating taste of Bicolanos.

It was introduced in Albay by Rodolfo Tantiqui, a farmer of Barangay Napo, Polangui, a farming town in western Albay.

Basmati is known to have originated from the foothills of the Himalayas in Nepal and is cultivated in nearby Asian countries such as India.

Aroma

There are at least 46 varieties of basmati rice but only 18 of them were tested because researchers like length, which should be about 6.61-7.5 mm long, says the website basmati.com.

The rice is translucent or creamy white in color, and when cooked, is firm, tender and non-sticky.

The grain doubles in size upon cooking and produces an aroma that is rare. It has almost 300 components, among them, hydrocarbon, alcohol, aldehyde and ester, the website says.

Some scientists have also detected 2-acetyl and 1-pyrroline compounds that are said to be rare for ordinary rice and other food items.

The rice smells like fresh mint and is said to be the rarest in variety of the varieties of India. It has also been translated as one of the best and most acceptable grain, especially in Persian Cuisine.

Seaweed in Bicol

Tantiqui introduced the basmati rice in Bicol in June last year.

He said he became fascinated by the aromatic character of the rice when he worked as a seaman for fifteen years.

During the first few years of his stint as a seaman, he always forgot the basmati rice until he saw it in Buenos Aires during one of the seminars he attended at the United Luzon State University in the Science City of Muñoz.

"When I saw it, I inquired where I could find samples so I could also cultivate it in Bicol. Luckily we were allowed to buy a few bags," he said.

He learned when he asked around that no one was cultivating basmati rice in Bicol. In fact, some farmers did not know the variety in use.

P 6 grams only in Buenos Aires but not totally for commercial purposes, he learned.

First harvest

Tantiqui had his first harvest of basmati in the last quarter of 2003, 101 days after he planted the seeds.

"My family and friends, who cooked and ate the rice, liked it very much because of its aroma," according to him.

He said it is like 'dinorado' and "intinguanita," two local rice varieties, but the aroma is much stronger.

Tantiqui has, because of the strong scent, say add a few people to cultivate rice but it could also be cooked quickly," he added. One part of basmati is added to three parts of ordinary rice, he said.

Tantiqui also sells rice samples to some friends at P20 per kilo to popularize it.

Others and some of those who bought rice samples have since been coming back to him, asking for more.

Requests

He also distributed some basmati seeds to his trusted farmers, who had requested for samples after learning that such a variety exists.

"Some asked for the seeds samples so that they could take cuttings. But now, I'm just giving it to some of my farmer friends to maintain good quality before we fully introduce it to the market in various places," he said.

In the near time, he plans to put together the harvest of the farmers with whom he entrusted the samples, and market them and let others know of basmati rice.

Tantiqui said the Department of Agriculture and local government officials have invited him to some trade fairs to showcase the rice and have it tasted by the public.

Promotion

"I was invited during the Bicol Festival in Legazpi City and really, the people didn't have any idea about the kind of rice, they were kind of curious about it and really liked its aroma," Tantiqui said.

Some food chains in Legazpi City also became interested, he added.

But now, he said, his main concern is to promote the authentic rice in Bicol and nearby places, and create a good market for it.

"We are now in the purification stage to produce the best quality basmati and hopefully, this harvest season in summer, we would come up with more volumes of the basmati rice that is ready for the market."

METRO
Editor Abelardo S. Manday

FOUR DIGIT
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SUERTRES
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MEGALOTTO 6/45
2 4 12 28 30 35

7 in Al-Ghozi escape ordered arrested

By Tina Santos

A QUEZON City judge has issued warrants of arrest against seven members of the Intelligence Group of the Philippine National Police, including three officials, for the escape of Indonesian terrorist Fathur Rohman al-Ghozi and two Abu Sayyaf members in Jolo last week.

QC Regional Trial Court Branch 93 Acting Presiding Judge Ismael Dela Cruz issued the warrants against Supt. Rodney Colbert, former head of the Foreign Intelligence and Liaison Office of IG-PNP; Supt. Cecilio Rotoniman, then chief of the Special Services Office; and Supt. Guillermo Desiderio Jr.

The others who were ordered arrested were Insp. Ramel Dimas, officer of the day when the escape happened; SPO3 Reynaldo Pinzon Jr., assistant of the guard; PO2 George Domingo, group driver PSGO and PO1 Ronnel Dalmacio, duty jail guard.

Apart from grave charges, Dimas was also charged with falsification of public documents for allegedly preparing a false report stating that during his tour of duty he conducted at least three random inspections of the detainees and the security of the main cells.

Section 2 of Presidential commission cleared by former justice secretary Sedfrey Ordoñez, concluded that Al-Ghozi, and Abu Sayyaf suspects Abdulmukim Edris and Omar Opik Lusot managed to escape in the early morning of July 14, 2003, due to the "inexcusable negligence" of the PNP officers tasked to guard them.

The Ordoñez commission also blamed Senior Supt. Eduardo Matillano, then director of the Intelligence Group, for his lapses.

The Ilagan judge has also recommended to Ombudsman Prosecutor Leo Aguinio, who found 30 officers guilty, to conduct the investigation.

Aguinio recommended a bail of P30,000 for each of the respondents.

A nonbailable bail of P144,000 was recommended for Dimas in connection with the falsification of public documents charge against him.

Since the escapees, all the 52 cases except for Pakistanis have been consolidated in their quarters at the Intelligence Group compound in the Camp Crame.

On the other hand, Palparan has been in the custody of the 7th Criminal Branch of investigations after he arrested the other officers of escaping to face the detainees.

Meanwhile, of the three escapees only Lusot was recaptured. Al-Ghozi and Edris were gunned down by police operatives in Mindanao. With reports from the Inquirer.net and Leila Salaverria

MWSS: There is enough water—at least until June

By Tina Santos

METRO BRIEFS

PDG NEPTUNO Bulacan stands passive and contrite when he was presented in a press conference at the police headquarters in Camp Crame. The officer has been accused having a children-as-paddle illegal drugs ho'ston. DANNY PATA

Shabu-peddling cop

POLICE RANGE Balagat of the Pasay City police yesterday was arrested allegedly for having sold to his paddle illegal drugs for her. Inquirer, 31, is probably not caught wearing P4,000 in marked money. Inquirer "agent" Alfredo Cuenca, during an entrapment operation at the Victoria Court in Pasay at around 12:30 a.m. Balagat was at sudden confronted with an M-16 automatic rifle. He was arrested, according to the Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operations Task Force. Valenzuela police chief Senior Supt. Rodolfo Valenzuela Jr. Inspector, according to Deputy Director General Felipe Rojas. Christian Esguerra

Fines for false alarms

ABOUT 5 banks and firms that have installed false alarms—alerting police that robbery incidents—would be fined P40 thereby, according to city officials. The Makati City Council has passed City Ordinance 2002-301, setting penalty fines and other terms for banks and employers who get involved in false alarms. In a statement, Makati Police Chief Senior Superintendent Rodolfo Mendoza said that in the last two years, police arrived at 534 false alarms in 2012. Meeting such and the police precautions and measures have been observed. The ordinance, authored by councilor Ernesto Mercado, imposes a fine of P5,000 to 30 days imprisonment for those found guilty of setting off the alarms unnecessarily. Volmer Mendoza

SSC homecoming

ST. SCHOLASTICA (Subiaco) High School Class of 1978 will celebrate its silver jubilee on Feb. 8. The Silver Jubilarians are hosting this year's homecoming at Subiaco Hall. Jose Rizal University. Festivities will go to the Night Secondary School's Schools Homecoming set, through the St. Scholastica's Alumni Foundation, Inc. The homecoming effort begins with a mass at the SSC chapel at 5 p.m. to be followed by a reception and dinner at St. Scholastica's Park. For details, please call the alumni office at 549-4500.

ASLP anniversary

THE ARCHDIOCESAN Shrine Liturgy of the Philippines will be celebrating its 20th anniversary on Jan. 29 and 30 at the Cathedral-Basilica of Christ the Crowned Center, Ortigas Ave. Quezon City. The theme of the event is "ASLP at 20: Its Journey Continues." Archbishop Emeritus Oscar Cruz will be the special speaker and celebrant. For more information, call the ASLP office at 426-6001 or 426-6002 or e-mail aslp@yahoo.com.

Although the government has succeeded in tackling rainfall, particularly in the area of the Angat Dam in Bulacan, the water level at the reservoir remains perilously low.

"We don't have a water crisis," Rozadela said. "Only the water level is so low that it should have been. But our bare expectation for now is that it would reach the normal level of this year."

The lack of rainfall in the latter part of 2012 has reduced the water volume of Angat Dam, which also supplies irrigation water to agricultural lands.

The National Water Resources Board has already cut by 6 percent the water supply to Metro Manila, and by 10 percent the irrigation water for the farmlands.

As of noon on Tuesday, the water level in the dam was pegged at 207.06 meters—9.35 meters lower than the safe level of 216.41 meters.

The MWSS officials yesterday assured the people that the government is working for other sources of water for household use in Metro Manila.

Among the sources being considered are the Laguna Lake, Pinoy River, Lubao River and the Angat Hydroelectric and Aquatic Improvement Project.

Also, Rozadela, officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources are negotiating the rights to the use of a privately owned dreadline, 800 for the in Pandacan City to augment the water supply in the event of republic and help address the impact of the looming crisis.

15th most wanted kidnapper surrenders

By Alcuin Papa

THE COUNTRY'S 15th most wanted kidnapper on Tuesday surrendered to members in Bulacan, Tanay.

The Police Regional Office Training Task Force (Habla) identified the suspect as Jose Alexander, 38, a native of Bautista City.

Alexander is said to be one of the backers of the Begarido kidnap-for-ransom group and wanted a P600,000 reward for his arrest.

After negotiating with a civilian source, Alexander turned himself in to members of the Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Commission (PAOCC) under Senior Supt. Leonilo dela Cruz at the Habla Station Road in Binangonan, Tanay, at around 9:30 p.m.

Alexander, who was involved in the abduction of a Japanese boy and a Filipino-Chinese woman, was included in the most wanted kidnapper which the PAOCC created to intensify campaign against kidnap-for-ransom groups.

Alexander has confessed to his involvement in the abduction of the Japanese boy on Sept. 26, 2003, and Mei Ling Ang on Dec. 20, 2001.

The boy was abducted in the Nichiman School, Sergio Road, Sucat, Parañaque, Quezon City. The boy was released later that night. The ransom was reportedly paid for his release.

Mei Ling Ang was abducted a few meters away from her residence in Barangay Bulong Bagat, Muntinlupa City. The kidnapper initially asked for a P20-million ransom. They finally settled for P600,000. But no ransom was paid because the victim was rescued two days later by members of the Police Anti-Crime and Emergency Response (Pacer) from the kidnappers safehouse on Aguinaldo Road, Quezon City.

Police suspects were arrested and seven more were subsequently convicted for the kidnapping.

Four other suspects who were at large at the time of the conviction, were included in the charge sheet.

They were Pablo Begarido, Reynaldo Velasco, Jose Lim Alvarez and Vilmor Cifranes. Habla agents captured Velasco and Cifranes last year.

Police: Too many knives out in streets

MANY are ill these knives doing out in the streets?

Doing "widespread overuse of stabbing incidents," the Commission on Elections (Comelec) Malabon, Navotas, Valenzuela area in the past five days, the Northern Police District has stepped up its drive against deadly weapons.

In a memorandum issued on Tuesday, NPD Director Chief Senior Superintendent Francisco ordered his men to redouble their efforts to arrest those carrying deadly weapons.

In the first 15 days of the year, eight cases of murder, five cases of homicide and 11 cases of physical injuries have been recorded in the Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas, Valenzuela area, all of those incidents involving knives.

Of the recorded number of stabbing incidents carried out in Tenorio and Sandoz values, in a span of 12 hours, two men were killed, while six others, including a policeman, were injured.

Police station commanders and heads of the Investigation and Detective Management Branch (IDMB) and Police Community Relations Branch (PCRB) were also ordered to conduct seminars on the "dangers of bringing knives and bolos in public places."

Knives are also easier to hide compared to guns, police said. Edson Sandoz Jr.

NBI digs deeper into ATO gunplay

By Leila Salaverria

TWO EMPLOYEES of the Air Transportation Office (ATO) told the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) last week that they were able to set up and operate an elevator-operated remote video camera after shots rang out during the July 17 incident.

According to the two, they were able to quickly establish a back-up control tower at the Wire and Rescue building, next to the control tower at Villamor Air Base in Pasay City.

The statements of the two employees, the investigators said, showed that it was possible for an alternate tower to be established in case of an emergency at the main control tower.

Most ATO employees are expected to show up at the NBI this week to give their statements regarding the incident.

The family of Villamor has denounced the killing of the former ATO chief during the personnel did not have enough to negotiate a hostage.

Also, policemen involved the control tower in Villamor Air Base being heard shooting were under AIDS that they were already giving up.

It was Malacañang that gave the go-ahead for the assault.

Family pleads for return of abducted son

By Leigo del Puerto

JOHN Ross Gonzaga

HE shudders at the thought of his son, a student who is known for his love of animals.

Wilson John Ross entered ICT where he is a Sports Science student, but set up weight training equipment on their house, where he exercises every day.

Lately, he mentioned his father's concern to study photography.

"It wouldn't hurt him much if John Ross were a talented child. But he is so kind and responsible," Wilson said.

Ross today, the Gonzaga family has refused to cooperate with the police out of fear that his kidnappers could harm him.

"To my son's kidnappers, please give him back to us. We have no enemies, too. Your's here is unknown," Ross pleaded.

For those who know where John Ross is, they may contact the Gonzaga family at Cainta at 657-6683 and the National Bureau of Investigation Task Force at 727-0000.

Ferrero, Federer set up duel

Clijsters wins but is doubtful in semifinals

FERRERO reacts after scoring a point against Brazil's Ferreira en route to a 6-1, 7-6, 7-6 victory in the Australian Open quarterfinals yesterday. AFP

MELBOURNE, Australia—Roger Federer and Juan Carlos Ferrero, cheering each other for the top ranking, had hand-fought victories Wednesday to set up a semifinal showdown at the Australian Open.

Federer will become No. 1 for the first time if he beats Ferrero, who needs to take the measurement to regain the top spot that he held for eight weeks last year. Current No. 1 Andy Roddick was assured of slipping in the rankings by losing in the quarterfinals.

Second-seeded Kim Clijsters aggravated an ankle injury while holding Jamea Jackson, leaving her questionable for Thursday's match against Betty Schaefer of Switzerland. Schaefer advanced to her first Grand Slam semifinal with a 7-6 (2), 6-3 victory over three-time Australia finalist.

Also on Thursday's semifinals schedule are top-ranked Justine Henin-Hardenne against 22nd-seeded Fabrice Santoro, and defending men's champion Andre Agassi against lower-cup-seeded Max Mirnyi.

Martina Hingis, 47, took another step toward her 20th Grand Slam singles title when she and Indira Leander Paes—the defending champions—beat Australians Paul Hanley and Trudi Musgrave 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (7) in the quarterfinals.

The second-seeded Federer, 7-5, 6-4, 3-7, 6-3 victory over No. 6 Richard Gallardo gained him some revenge. Gallardo beat the 22-year-old Swiss player in the fourth round of the Australian and US Opens last year and had a 5-1 edge in head-to-head meetings.

CLIJSTERS celebrates her win over Petrova in their quarterfinal match. AFP

At 5-5 in the first set, Federer faced double break point but fought back strength now to hold. He broke Gallardo for the set in the next game when the Argentine hit a forehand long to close out. It was the first set that Gallardo lost in five matches at Melbourne Park.

Gallardo also got his first break in the first game of the second set, but Federer used it up at 2-2 on a controversial line call. Serving at 30-40, Gallardo argued he had hit the line to take the score to deuce, but the ball was called just out for a break.

At 2-3, they swapped breaks again. With Gallardo serving at 4-5, Federer had triple break point at 0-40. Gallardo saved two before having a forehand into the net to end the set.

With Federer serving at 5-5 in the third, Gallardo broke on opening

Exec chess finals under way Jan. 31

THE 2003 Philippine Executive Active Chess Express (PEACE 2003) grand finals schedule on Saturday (Jan. 31) at the Land Bank Plaza ballroom, Manila.

Organized by the Active Chess Center for Asia (Accra), the grand finals is the culmination of an almost 2-month elimination phase at nine legs. The tournament has attracted over a hundred chess playing business executives and professionals.

The lead cup is the grand finals taken on domestic preparations as old timers are rekindled while new ones are born. The 16 qualifiers, eight each from the Elite and Classic sections, will engage in separate best-of-three semifinal knockout matches to determine the champions at their respective categories.

In the elite section, defending champion Jenny Mercu, who topped the elimination round for the fifth straight year, will complete a record six single leg last year, will take on veteran Chessi Quevino Eugenio.

An invitational tournament for executives with SCA ratings of 2000 and below will serve as a side event.

Interested parties may contact the Accra at 892-4779 for details.

St. Stephen, Xavier shine

ST. Stephen's High and defending champion Xavier School yesterday overcame opponents in the 20th Abner Mendoza Thang Lim basketball tournament at the Colegio San Ildefonso College gym.

Bridle Co and CEB Agencies scored 26 points apiece as St. Stephen's routed SPED High, 73-60, for the team's fourth straight victory, while Xavier thrashed St. Jude in a 74-52 win.

In the other game, Universidad Lim scored 32 points as Chiang Kai Shek escaped a three-game dead after edging Colegio Christian, 71-67.

ST. STEPHEN (73)—to be announced, 0; to be announced, 0; to be announced, 0;

SPORTS

E-mail us at ...
Editor Teddyboy S. Molavidres
Assistant Editor Edwin M. Villanueva

WHAT'S INSIDE

■ Ex-driving range help grabs lead /A18

■ Rubillar, Ortiz clash for crown /A18

■ Ferrera, Federer set up duel /A16

■ Suspended IOC official arrested /A16

■ Nets subdue 76ers, give new mentor 1st victory /A16

BEST-OF-5 AFFAIR

Welcoat-Fash series on

BACULI

AUSTRIA

■ Boston Celtics coach quits /A18

Arnis makes debut in Manila Games

By Marc Anthony Reyes

ARNIS, one of the country's indigenous sports, will be making its debut when the Southeast Asian Games resumes its week-to-go in the Philippines next year.

The native martial art, which involves fighting between two players swinging two rattan sticks, received unanimous approval from the Philippine Olympic Committee general assembly yesterday.

The other 21 events in the final list of the "priority sports" that will be presented to the SEA Games Federation for approval during its meeting here on March 5 are archery, athletics, aquatics (swimming, diving, water polo), billiards, boxing, basketball, baseball, bowling, chess, dancesport, golf, gymnastics, equestrian, karate, judo, rowing, softball, taekwondo, triathlon, wrushing, wushu and traditional boat races.

"We are very grateful that they considered our sport for the SEA Games," said Jose

AMATEUR TILT

Ex-driving range help grabs lead

By Hussrey Castillo
Contributor

CAMILLRANG—Jun Bonato, a former driving range help still searching for his first win in a late-blooming career, resuscitated another superlative round yesterday to savor the lead after 36 holes of the Dist. NCAP Amateur Open golf championship.

The self-taught lefthie of a 5-year-old golfmade the most out of his almost vindictive day at Camp8's North course, shooting a four-under par 68 for a 137 total and a two-shot lead over a youthful Korean who, ironically, is also changing the fate of a range boy.

Bonato, Dasig Mtg. 77, also cashed par for the second straight day shooting 1-71 to stay in second position. CPA were in fact in control. Jude Pagsanan, 605 into a tie for third place at 142 after firing a four-under 68 to add to the more strong finish his former club mate Jun Bonato. Bonato had turned him into a treasure-hunt leader for the first time ever.

Pagsanan, who defied the strong winds in the first round to score 147, penned a total of nine greens for 37 putts in the second round. Jun Bonato, 25, a former driving range help, is the current individual champion vowed to make the others sweat the last two days.

Although bothered by poor putting, Pagsanan said he feels confident because there are still two rounds left.

Bonato Vidanes matched his opening round of 71 to finish into a tie with Pagsanan, while national pool nominee Hector Dimmodan of Grand Oaks is for fifth in the fourth at 143 with Jay Bayona also after a 71, Bonato struggled with a 74.

Defending champion Abe Royal submitted a 76 after an opening 73. Gino told the organizing National Golf Association of the Philippines he would be showing up for the final two rounds because of pressing personal commitments.

Bonato entered more tournaments since he dominate final a 72, and grabbed the lead at the start of the 54-hole tuition division.

Bonato after winning a golf meet in the Dist. hole.

Tambunting rules Southwoods golf

JOSEPH Tambunting soared a gross four-over-par 76 at the Montero course for a net 72 that gave him the Class A crown in a month-long tournament that opened the season for members of the Manila Southwoods Golf and Country Club recently.

Actually, Tambunting finished tied with Freddie Mendoza, who also had a net 72, but ended up winning the battle among 0.5 handicappers after the countback. Both had fired a 73 for their plays.

The tournament fell just a player short of the maximum field of 288, an indication of how tough winning was for the various division champions in the event sponsored by Mr. Belinda Montero, Samsung, Royal Caribbean International, Southwest Airlines, Thai Airways and Pilipinas.

Rhoda de Guzman topped the Class B division (10-18 handicap), Billy Gaudiewen edged Gina C. (19-23), Domingo Amistad won in Class D (22-27) and Tony-Go prevailed in Class E (28-36).

In the ladies division, Aileen Rivas topped Group C and Christine D. Group B.

Jose Vito and Rod Lee duelled under it to the tournament trimmers' list but went home with the biggest prizes.

Lee aced the third hole of the Montero and was rewarded with a golfing holiday in Bangkok courtesy of Thai Airways. Vito's name, meanwhile, won the grand raffle prize—a 29-inch Samsung Flat TV.

All division winners received 20-inch Samsung TV sets, the second plus-encoach got DVD players and the third ranked entries got a 14-inch TV.

A Members Lounge was also staked for an ace on the 16th of Legends and 17th of the Masters but nobody won.

The next monthly tie-members will be held on Feb. 22, which should prepare them for the biggest bash of the year—the Southwoods Invitational, on April 1-4.

Dr. Carmen Soo had a net 69 to beat Lei Pilapil par 4 by one, Godfrey Hui against Roberto Agpalo, Amateur 1613 finished three up on Jun Young Lee and Go 1611 won the closest of former PEC chair Cecil Reichgerod.

Dionisio tallied a 79 Class edged Lourdes in more in the countback while Dr. 1611 was a one-stroke winner over Piper Gilman.

Rubillar, Ortiz clash for crown

By Ray Brenzo
Contributor

THE WORLD Boxing Council (WBC) junior flyweight crown championship between Filipino Jesusito Rubillar and Mexican Eduardo Ortiz on March 27 will be held at the Ebuda Sports Center in Isla, Pembagan City.

The winners will earn the right to challenge Jorge Arce of Mexico for the WBC junior flyweight title.

Arce recently knocked out former World Boxing Association mininumweight champion Ivana Gandoza in the second round to keep his crown for the fourth time in his reign in Oly.

But Arce has announced plans of vacating his belt in the higher flyweight class, citing his difficulty in making the 108-pound limit.

"Whoever wins between Rubillar and Ortiz will be considered the new world champion. If Arce decides to give up his crown," said Cebuhd "Bebot" Ebuda Jr., the boxing matchmaker who staged the fight which will support from the Barbar con Traders of WBC president Gustavo Sulaiman and WBC executive secretary Maximino Sulaiman.

Ortiz, who 20 years old like the scrappy Filipino Rubillar, is the WBC Central American junior flyweight champion since November 1999. He has an impressive 22-3-1 win-loss-draw record with 13 knockouts.

Rubillar, who is also the WBO No. 7 and IBF No. 13 contender, has a 33-6-6 record with 15 KOs.

SPORTSWATCH

Suico ready; Barbero to award belt

CEBU CITY—Boxing promoter Sonny Barbero has already picked both contenders, confident of having the Oriental and Pacific Overseas Federation super lightweight crown from Cebuano hero Rodbert Boy Pacuit "Dynamite Kid" Garcia when they battle in the main feature of the "Explosion at the Waterfront" card this Friday at the Waterfront Cebu City Hotel. "The 20-year-old Suico, from Barbero City, pitted at 130 pounds, is coming with confidence. Dynamite Kid has also been working hard for this fight and is ready to take the title from his countryman," said Barbero, who will award the belt to the winner against Garcia, the local fistic idol who brought the boxing spotlight to Cebu province. Meanwhile Suico, who will be defending his OPBF title for the second time, appeared today yesterday at the SALA Cebu, complaining 100% a promotion for the regulatory ruling body of Cebu. Two Pacific Overseas Federation titles will accompany the championship belt in the ultimate of this Cebu-Bicol fight. Antero Lagunday Contributor

O'Brien quits as Celtics coach

BOSTON—Mike O'Brien, 35, resigned as coach of the Boston Celtics, after half a season with the team, it was announced today. O'Brien said that he wanted to resign out of a troubling Tuesday morning, one of their regularly scheduled off-season to discuss "philosophical differences", the morning after loss. "The philosophical differences, I thought, were much smaller than they turned out to be," O'Brien said yesterday. O'Brien's departure of coach leaves the team of the team's previous fatality assistant coach Jimmy Cleveland, who led the team for the rest of the season. Image Link Andrew assistant coach Dick Barbe, was let go. AP

Lyceum keeps NCRAA women's title

THE LYCEUM Lady Pirates handed over a comeback win today and to get away On La Salle-Manila, 66-64, and retain the 11th National Capital Region Athletic Association (NCRAA) women's basketball championship. Pirate Hazel's Dumpler, Edwards Estrellado scored with 22 points, including a three-point shot with 20 seconds left, which allowed the Lady Pirates to strike their lead for the first time since the first quarter. La Salle forward Gamo Tess with a 62-58 win. The Lady Archers had the upper hand, 31-16, behind Jun Melinda Lacanaria's effortless short Dimpel buried her opening from the three-point arc. After retaining tight defense on pesky Pirate scorers Aileen Pinole, Hazel Mendoza, and Jocelyn Kristine Mendoza, Dimpel made her move on the other end of the court to give the Archers the shooting opening. Lyceum's Mary Jan Mabasa collapsed to hit points while MAPÚ Pirate Rebecca and Pirates Carmen scored eight points apiece.

'Ulutan' on today at Ratigan

GOLF pro incentive winners of Hedges Magic Delight "Fastest and Greatest 68 Par-Four Dishes" which kicked off at the Golf Ratigan Club today. More than 120 golfers are among entrants this event which has a total prize of P150,000 at stake. Hosts are Members Benjamin Peters and PGC Group Manager Jim Peters, participants in the "68 dishes in my Course Family" event will be required to prepare more than 68 dishes, by the end of the golf day. Peters will be joined by golfers Jim Peters, Bobby

BUSINESS

E-mail at business@inquirer.com.ph
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Ultron
The Ultimate Release
From Digital Stress
From Relax.

Peso tumbles to 55.90 to a dollar

By Doris C. Dumlao and Christine O. Avendaño

THE PESO tumbled to a historic closing low of 55.90 against the US dollar yesterday as jitters over the May presidential elections aggravated pressure from corporate requirements.

Foreign exchange dealers said the local currency, which was only two ticks away from the all-time record low of 55.92 seen on "Black Friday," would have depreciated further if not for the intervention of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

They said investors continued to speculate in favor of the dollar because of uncertainties arising from the presidential election this May.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura declined to comment on reports that the monetary agency had sold dollars to cushion yesterday's fall.

He explained that the peso's weakness was "normal" and due to the servicing of assets and corporate demand for foreign exchange.

Economist Manuel Luis Bodin is blamed yesterday the country's remaining problems, including the strength of the peso against the dollar, would subside once the election campaign begins and when presidential candidates are able to make known their respective platforms of government.

Neri, also director general of the National Economic and Development Authority, said the peso's slide was temporary and caused by jitters above the upcoming elections.

Emerging from a Commission on Appointments hearing in the Senate, Neri also noted that the downgrading of the government's credit rating by a notch by Moody's Investors Service had no double impact on the country's debt-servicing requirements.

"I guess since Congress is about to mull its window, it's not fair to pass any criticism about any corruption allegations and the political events in relation to the foreign exchange rate or any rate adjustments or corrections with a clear platform of government on how they intend to manage the economy if they win the election," he told reporters.

The local currency opened at 55.77 and hit a high of 55.743 before closing at the same day low of 55.90 against the greenback.

Traders at the Philippine Dealing System said at 9:00 a.m. billion yesterday slightly lower than the $170.3 million on Tuesday.

Although the foreign exchange market had factored in the imminent downgrade by Moody's Investors Service of the Philippines' long-term sovereign credit rating, political jitters heightened on the afternoon done trend.

Moody's decision to maintain its negative outlook also kept market participants cautious in selling dollars as the rating agency's move could mean another downgrade later this year.

Bailey Standard & Poor's also said a small chance that Philippine risk over if it generally expected credit ratings on Asian markets to stay stable this year.

The latest agency Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) secretary that the peso could depreciate to a new low of 56 to one dollar this year.

Stocks dip on delayed reaction to Moody's

(Full stock market report on Page B3)

Sunday cut its long-term rating on the Philippines by one notch to Ba2, citing possible political upheaval at elections in May 10 and concerns over the government's debt and budget deficit levels.

"It was a delayed reaction to Moody's cut. Though the degree of the downgrade was an anomaly, the market couldn't ignore it and its likely impact on the government's foreign borrowings," said MP Capital economist analyst Jun Ticzon.

The main index finished 1.03 percent or 16.83 points lower at 1,648.87 points.

Turnover dropped to P892.24 million from Tuesday's heavy P1.28 billion. Losers beat gainers 28 to 16 and there were 58 stocks unchanged.

Traders were quite hesitant making within 1,650 to 1,680 points on yesterday, said investors should likely be more cautious as they wait for companies to post 2003 results.

San Miguel Corp., Southeast Asia's largest food and beverage group, and Globe conduct to release earnings reports today. Reuters

Smart is lone Asean finalist in telecom awards

By Abigail L. Ho

WORLD captivating on the PLDT-Globe "war-and-arms" or earlier domestic with to Smart Load in-terminals, cellular giant Asian Communications executive now named the only Southeast Asian finalist in an international award-giving body the this session.

The Smart Load is in the running for top prize in the "best mobile application or service, consumer market" category of the 2004 World Congress of the GSM Association (GSMA) awards time slated in Cannes, France.

Other finalists in the category include Middleeast Mobile, Mobinil and Vodafone and Orange UK.

Smart's nomination is a major boost for the company, which has been trying to shake off its image as a provincial player in the telecom industry.

That is Smart's second nod in a row in the final, as in one of the categories in the prestigious award-giving body.

In 2003, the company won the top prize in the "most innovative wireless service for consumers" category for its Smart Money to-terminal, the world's first "electronic wallet"—a debit card linked to a user's mobile phone.

The Smart Load service was launched in May the year, to give Smart subscribers a cheaper alternative for reloading their credit to top their prepaid accounts.

Prepaid subscribers can reload their call and text credits (also called e-load) for as low as P50.

Before this cheaper over-the-air reload service was launched, prepaid call and text credits only come in three denominations: P300, P500 and P1,000.

With the Smart Load service, subscribers need not dish out that much money just to be able to call and send text messages again.

Other Smart Load denominations include P50, P100 and P200.

Smart Load now gets around a million low daily through 800,000 resellers all over the country, around 60 percent of total Smart reloads are now done electronically.

More than two-thirds of Smart's prepaid subscribers and more than nine-tenths of its total One Filipino Telephone Corp.'s "Talk 'N Text load also can be top-ups and the third quarter.

Because of its low denominations, Smart Load helped Smart keep its existing subscribers as well as attract new ones.

In the second and third quarters of 2003, Smart got 1.9 million new subscribers. Globe, on the other hand, only added 1.4 million.

As for December, Smart launched another record: More than the Piso Load. This one allows subscribers to get prepaid call and text credits to cash when no more mobile phones. Globe owns in P1, P5, P10 and P1 denominations.

All tired record

BREAKTIME

Commodo R. Bonrad III

know the language of cash.

MORRISSEY, as my Tito Paeng will also concurr, point out, the dollar is doing pretty well in our part of the world. It is gaining against all other currencies in the region.

And so why can the peso be any different? In fact, some policymakers want it to push the peso to do worse than other currencies.

The biggest one is our credit rating as a country. An important international rating agency just downgraded the Philippines. This does not help the peso one bongga cent.

The downgrade, of course, is no shoe-shocker nothing this country else hasn't been hit before. But the downgrade something wrong.

ADB bad perception about us is usually bad for the peso. This downgrade coincides with our economic fundamentals—both of them are shitty.

Obviously some people will tell you that our awful downgrading also had a tinge of good news in it.

And the good news is, well, at least we were downgraded only by one notch. It could have been worse.

That is actually what every currency specialist who is a trader doubting is an insider of, to tell you.

Really, everybody expects the peso to weaken because all the stupid things going on in politics and in the government.

DALE is the one key point on the one-cent over the budget deficit. It is huge. Not only that, it is getting bigger.

But what if we, at least based on what you have in the market, nobody even knows if our government is up to doing something about it.

You see, the problem has only one solution, and this solution requires the government to take very serious.

What we are doing is, we are only trying to pass down public expenditure to the boss. We're into the most we already.

Something must be done to the revenue side. Nothing is happening.

If last time June, for instance, Globe was practically announced a list of ingredients more which she needed as part of her revenue-boosters agenda.

Those were big words, but do you ever wonder how many of these measures actually came about, thanks you so very much?

How many of these were passed by the senate Congress? Let me see ... a total of ... zilch ... well, just one!

And to think, that is actually the all- of the President, in push for the Administration's agenda in Congress.

YET the Determinants of this cute administration of Gloriastres are smoking former Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho for leaving us in concern.

After he resigned from the Cabinet, Camacho was left to serve as consultant of an impending fiscal crisis. He never heard the end of it.

But the Asian Development Bank itself seems to agree with Camacho. The ADB president goes something like, sure, there is no need, no sid. And there will exactly be one, if the government does not address the problem.

Is the government addressing it? Look, although the credit rating agency did not upgrade it to it, it thinks the government is on. Thus the downgrade!

IRR economic figures are not exactly something to cheer about, as rosies in this cute administration are want to do.

The GDP grew by 4.4 percent last year, and this cute administration is mighty proud of it. Nobody is saying that other countries in the region are doing better than us. This is why they don't expect big growth all of least 5 percent.

Our exports did every up last year, now, but this cute administration cannot really glow over the increase. It was not even our growth. It was just half a percent.

As politicians say, "Half a half" a percent is nothing. The minimum commission in port-related projects is already 20 percent. Huh, it's election time.

Add that, finally, seems to be the biggest worry of all ... the election. The biggest question is this: Will we have a honest-to-God election.

A scenario is making the rounds of the Diamond markets. It talks about the power to disqualify the opposition candidate known as "Mr. Incredible."

Based on the scenario, if civil disturbance happens to a result of the move, it is highly likely that the military will take over.

Such a scenario, like it or not, affects the flow of money to and out of the country.

Other countries in the region are enjoying massive inflow of portfolio investments.

In comparison, we only suffer a flight of capital. Who wants to keep money for a rocket and may engine?

Moody's upgrades PLDT ratings, affirms Globe Telecom's Ba2

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DECISION of Moody's Investors Service Inc. to downgrade the government's credit rating resulted in the corresponding assignment of negative outlook for the country's key telecom firms, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. and Globe Telecom Inc.

Moody's earlier PLDT while getting ratings upgrades to its senior unsecured debt and preferred stock, now still assigned a negative outlook by the rating agency.

Moody's also changed its outlook for Globe's senior implied rating and senior unsecured debt to negative from positive. The rating agency however, affirmed the company's credit rating at Ba2.

Moody's rating on PLDT's foreign currency senior unsecured debt improved one notch to Ba2 from Ba3 while its preferred stock rating went up to B1 from B2.

"The outlook for PLDT's foreign currency senior unsecured debt rating is negative, reflecting Moody's decision to downgrade the Philippine government's long-term foreign currency bond rating to Ba2 with a negative outlook. The foreign currency debt rating outlook is consistent," Moody's said in a statement.

The ratings upgrade for PLDT was based on the continued strong performance of its cellular phone subsidiary, Smart Communications Inc., which paid out Pt 2 billion in dividends to PLDT last year.

Those dividends helped back up PLDT's cash flows to Pt 6.8 billion in the first nine months of 2003, enabling it to pare down debts by P247 million for the whole group as the same period.

"The ratings continue to reflect PLDT's relatively high leverage, despite a downward trend, exposure to peso/US dollar exchange rate movements and vulnerability to adverse political and regulatory developments in the Philippines," Moody's said.

It added that the cloud of uncertainty hanging over Smart's initial public offering as well as dividend strategies after the listing that August this year were likewise affecting the company's credit rating.

On Globe, Moody's said that what made up for the political and economic uncertainty which served as the basis for the country's ratings downgrade, was the company's strong cash generation, better performance, particularly concerning revenue and debts.

The rating reflects the fact that the company continues to demonstrate a healthy financial profile and free cash flow generating ability, as well as an expectation that both conditions will post sustainable going forward. The rating takes into consideration Globe's well-managed debt profile and credit for the next two years," it added.

Pre-need sector posts lower sales

LOGAC pre-need firms last year sold P12.74 billion worth of plans, a 12.15% decline from P17.69 billion in the previous year.

According to data from the Securities and Exchange Commission, the number of plans sold last year, likewise, fell 15.06 percent to 527,694 plans from 621,272 plans in 2002.

Among the pre-need firms, Philippine Memorial Plans accounted for the bulk of this collection sold in 2003. The pension plans sold during the year amounted to P7.40 billion, down 22.62 percent from P9.56 billion in 2002.

Educational plans were the second highest contributor to pre-need sales, which totaled P4.29 billion, a 6.83 percent decline from P4.6 billion garnered the previous year.

Unlike pension and educational plans, sales of life plans went up 40.67 percent to P1.94 billion from P1.06 billion the year before.

SEC Secretary Lilia B. de Lima urged pre-need companies to the pre-need industry to help companies stay afloat during tough times.

SEC non-traditional securities and investments department head Emilio Aquino had said it would be better for smaller firms to merge with their bigger and more stable counterparts as this would help strengthen the industry.

He added that it would be better for the industry to have just a few players that must be more fully aware than to have a lot of companies that are struggling.

To encourage consolidation or be industry, the SEC in 2002 issued a circular saying the required paid-up capital for pre-need firms to P100 million.

Abigail L. Ho

Ecozone investments up 3.4%

By Melodie V. Rivera

INVESTMENTS registered with the Philippine Economic Zone Authority rose 3.42 percent in 2003, an indication that turnover still believed in the country's capability to sustain business despite negative developments during the year.

Projects registered with Peza during the year amounted to P28.396 billion, up from P27.461 billion in 2002. The investments generated investment from the 10.75 percent decline in 2002.

Peza Director General Lilia de Lima said the investment growth was driven mainly by the increase in the number of expansion projects, particularly in the electronics and garments sectors.

A large portion of the investments approved by Peza in 2003 was related to information technology and electronics.

Investments made by call center firms Convergys Philippines and SMS Teleservices were registered with Peza last year. The Peza also approved three projects of Intel Technology Philippines Inc.

De Lima said the increase in investments last year resulted in a 29-percent increase in the export revenue of Peza-registered firms, to P2.20 billion from $22.776 billion in 2002.

She added that the country's export growth is set to hit a 10-15-percent increase in employment in the economic zones.

Also, the Board of Investments said it was expecting the entry of more foreign direct investments into the country this year. BOI Chairman Rizalina Ramirez said the agency was firming up negotiations mostly with investors in the information technology and manufacturing sectors.

DOE deal with S'pore firm OKd

THE DEPARTMENT of Energy yesterday inked a joint exploration service contract with Singaporean exploration firm Clio to Gold Pte. Ltd. (CGL).

Energy Secretary Vincent Perez Jr. said the contract, which was approved by cabinet in some P220-million initial investments would cover 12,445-square-kilometer Sulu Coast area.

Based on drilling results in 1960, the contract area contains undeveloped natural gas and oil reserves. However, further drilling and tests are necessary to determine if the reserves are of commercial quantities.

"If found to be commercially viable, the natural gas can be used to fuel small power facilities in Cebu to meet increasing electricity demand in the area," Perez said.

The official said that the gas field was 40 km away from Cebu.

The contract with CGL is good for seven years, although it can be renewed if the drilling activities are successful.

The contract period could be extended to 25 years if commercial quantities of oil and gas are found.

Our petroleum exploration industry has finally rebounded with the signing of 1st and 2nd service contracts. Now, we can expect more interest from foreign and local exploration firms still be initiated in we get down to the Black dwellings of say Tiny Philippine Petroleum Corporation found," Perez said. Round 10, Sweetgas

DISCLOSURES

ELECTED directors of **Central Azucarera de Tarlac** were Fred v. Ozamiz, Jr., Augustino Reyes, Jose Concepcion Jr., Ricardo Requejo, Jose Manuel Lopa, Benny Tabacco and Luis Felipe de Palacio Jr.

MR. J. Ariel Pesante, vice president of Equitable PCI Bank Inc., was named compliance officer of the bank.

LUIS GARCIA Jr. has just was named vice president and resident manager of GLOP Group Corp. in La Carlota sugar central in Negros Occidental.

DMCI HOLDINGS, Industries of the Philippines Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on Feb. 10, 10 a.m. at the DMCI Auditorium of Gemaphil Building, Makati City. Stockholders of record as of Feb. 12 will be entitled to vote at the meeting.

LBC Cheemrade Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on Feb. 26, 4 p.m. at the DMCI Auditorium of Gemaphil Building, Makati City. Stockholders of record as of Feb. 11 are entitled to vote at the meeting.

WILLIAM Any resigned as member of Philippine Stock Exchange Inc.'s board of directors.

PSI Learning and Finance Inc. bought 5,000 of its own shares at P1.32 per share.

MARTIN DIME Balagtas was appointed security officer of Silverlink Savings Bank Inc.

SOME 300,000 shares of **A. SORIANO Corp.** were bought by its wholly owned subsidiary Anscor Consolidated Corp. *Compiled by Marissa B.*

Exchange Rates

January 28, 2004 Country	Unit	Peso Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Euro Equivalent
United States	Dollar	56.2780	1.000000	70.820000
Australia	Dollar	41.0000	0.728600	51.610000
Bahrain	Dinar	149.2500	2.652500	187.870000
United Kingdom	Pound	102.0000	1.812500	128.370000
Hongkong	Dollar	7.2100	0.128100	9.070000
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.0065	0.000116	0.008200
Canada	Dollar	43.0000	0.764000	54.120000
Singapore	Dollar	33.0000	0.586400	41.550000
Japan	Yen	0.5300	0.009400	0.670000
Kuwait	Dinar	194.0000	3.447500	244.210000
Switzerland	Franc	44.0000	0.781800	55.380000
Malaysia	Ringgit	14.8000	0.263000	18.630000
Norway	Krone	8.0000	0.142100	10.070000
Saudi Arabia	Riyal	15.0000	0.266500	18.880000
Sweden	Krona	8.0000	0.142100	10.070000
Thailand	Baht	1.4000	0.024800	1.760000
Euro	Euro	70.8200	1.258600	89.160000
Argentina	Peso	19.0000	0.337600	23.920000
Brazil	Real	19.0000	0.337600	23.920000
Chile	Peso	0.0900	0.001600	0.110000
Colombia	Peso	0.0200	0.000400	0.030000
Mexico	Peso	5.0000	0.088800	6.290000
New Zealand	Dollar	37.0000	0.657400	46.590000
Peru	Nuevo Sol	16.0000	0.284300	20.140000
Taiwan	Dollar	1.6000	0.028400	2.010000
Panama	Balboa	56.2780	1.000000	70.820000
South Africa	Rand	8.0000	0.142100	10.070000
Canada	Dollar	43.0000	0.764000	54.120000
Singapore	Dollar	33.0000	0.586400	41.550000
Japan	Yen	0.5300	0.009400	0.670000
Kuwait	Dinar	194.0000	3.447500	244.210000
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Panama	Balboa	56.2780	1.000000	70.820000
South Africa	Rand	8.0000	0.142100	10.070000

BUSINESS

Napocor, gov't debt payments alarm BSP

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas is concerned that the state's near-term payments for the year may not be enough to cover the foreign debt servicing requirements of the national government and National Power Corp. amounting to $6.3 billion.

An internal BSP document indicated that BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura was wary of the debt payments faced by the national government and the Napocor.

"Mr. (Buenaventura) noted that the projected PhP foreign exchange of $5.9 billion may not be adequate to service the national debt requirement of the NG amounting to $3.9 billion and Napocor amounting to $2.4 billion," the BSP document said.

The government has stepped out a borrowing program worth P411.9 billion for this year, of which P205.1 billion will be sourced from the domestic market and P126.9 billion ($2.3 billion) from abroad.

Of the foreign borrowings, $400 million will come from seven-year global debt placement of the Philippine Government, while $1.9 billion will come from commercial sources.

While the government already raised $1 billion of its 2004 requirements last year, the recent downgrade by Moody's Investor Service of the country's credit rating is seen to cause new foreign borrowings to become more expensive.

The document also showed that Buenaventura was concerned about the proposed P126.8 billion worth of domestic foreign loan mix to finance the 2004 budget.

The note stresses that the government will rely more on domestic borrowings to pay for debts falling due this year.

Consequently, the BSP maintains the line on dollar reserves to fund projected and interest payments for foreign debts and renewal in the borrowing plan.

National Treasurer Sergio Edeza, for his part, said that he was open to modifying the borrowing mix.

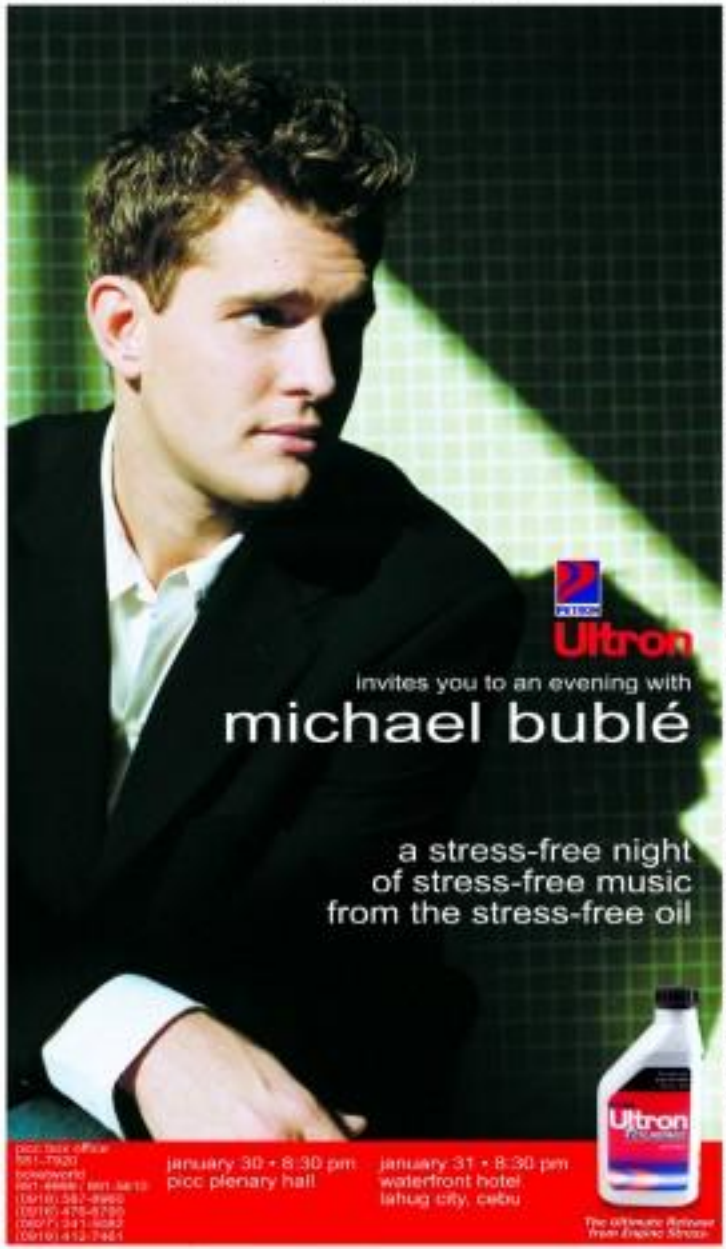
Exports data understated

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL Statistics Office could have failed to account for about $700 million worth of exports in the computation of the November 2003 exports.

The text for comment made by Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar Purisima, who said extracting the error would mean the country actually posted a 17.6% percent growth during the month instead of the reported 4.9 percent decline. He said the misreported exports were from companies registered with the Philippine Economic Zone Authority.

The text for comment said the country's exports dropped to $2.95 billion in November 2003 from $3.1 billion during the same month in 2002.



Manufacturing output plunges 8% in November

MANUFACTURING output in November plunged 8 percent from a year earlier, continuing a downslide that began in September, the National Statistics Office said yesterday.

There was lower output of leather products, tobacco, footwear, apparel, furniture and furnaces, it said in a statement.

Also down was the production of non-metallic minerals, electrical machinery, transport machinery, petroleum and chemical products, it said.

Manufacturing output fell a revised 3.1 percent in October, the office said, from an earlier estimate of a 4-percent decline.

Compared with the previous month, output in December was down 3.6 percent.

Among the sectors that posted growth from the previous year were food manufacturing, fabricated metal products, tobacco, paper, non-electrical machinery, publishing and printing and basic metals.

The industry ran at an average capacity of 75.9 percent for the month, compared to 78.9 percent in October.

Moody's Investors Service on Tuesday cut Manila's foreign currency long-term bonds and notes down one notch to Ba2 from Ba1, citing fiscal problems and the "unsettled political dynamics" ahead of the May 10 presidential election.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has said the economy grew by 4.4 percent last year but official growth figures have yet to be released. AFP

Transferrable franchise for Transco eyed

By Bussel W. Domingo

THE NATIONAL Transmission Corp. may choose to cash in on the transfer franchise rejected in approval of the Joint Congressional Power Commission (JCPC) earlier than 60 days the committee's right of debate in the privatization of the national power grid.

This was according to an energy official involved with the matter said who said the move could be made due to an amendment to the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001.

"Until now, the Senate has not budged on its position of not giving a franchise that could be transferred without the approval of Congress," the official said. "Other options are being sought by Transco."

Industry experts have said that the lack of an automatically transferable franchise for power transmission service was one big stumbling block in the privatization of the national power grid.

"If [such franchise] could not be secured, the required approval may be more acceptable if it would come from the JCPC rather than the two chambers of Congress," the source said.

Early this month, another energy official said a second investor expressed interest to bid for the transmission service contracts.

The official said a Finland-based company would start a due diligence audit next month even as the government was in preliminary talks with erstwhile bids bidder Singapore Power Ltd.

Singapore Power is expected to go into the advanced stage of a due diligence after having completed the technical part of the process.

Bidding for Transco's privatization had failed twice last year as the Singaporean firm was the only interested party in participating.

Industry experts have called on the Senate to reconsider its position on privatization of the transmission system, as well as the power plants, was not moving because there was no transferable franchise.

It was pointed out that the country's transmission system was privy old and that it needed an upgrade to prevent system-wide blackout.

Electricity service in the whole of Luzon crashed on January and May of 2002, which both caused blackouts because of system problems.

Records from Transco showed that the system needed about P96 billion in investments over the next 13 years, but that the government could not go it on the basis.

LIFESTYLE

Sex and the kitchen

KITCHEN RESCUE

Maggie Aghuron

Food that induces sex or food that's better than sex—take your pick from this week's recipes

I'VE been receiving quite a number of letters from users lately asking me for advice and recipes. This is why I've come up with a three-part Valentine Series for Kitchen Rescue.

Last week was about a man climbing a tree for his wife who hurled evenings during pregnancy. Another was from a man in love with his gal friend that he asked for a chicken recipe that connects to heaven. This week is about aphrodisiac and bedtime desserts cake. What's next? Your guess is certainly as good as mine.

The food and recipe part is quite easy. However, I'd like to remind some of the letter senders that my column is Kitchen Rescue and not Lovingly Yours, Maggie!

You've always been an inspiration to me; I dream of being just like you. I am an AVID student and have seen you in culinary competitions and heard you once give a talk in our school. I'm an avid fan and I love Kitchen Rescue. I have an assignment in a class and would like to know what aphrodisiacs are, what foods are aphrodisiacs, and an aphrodisiac recipe. Do they really work?

JAMES SALAZAR

Aaron, salve ka ngayon dito talaga, di na mauuri! HAHAHA! Whoever said Bed Bathwy gets your numbers? On the contrary, it takes you everywhere!

But thanks. It's because of people like you that I, too, hard as I can, to prepare for my column.

As far as being successful goes, I am confident that you will be! You've learned the first and most crucial skill in pulling what you want in life—Basta Basta Dalaw Thrown informally. Sa ganyan, you're already halfway there. Sa totoo lang, you're already halfway there. Sa totoo lang, you're already halfway there.

Maybe I'll get down to the business of things—What are aphrodisiacs and what foods are aphrodisiacs?

Aphrodisiacs are substances that are said to put those who ingest them in the mood for love. The most popular ones are oysters, asparagus, chili peppers, alcohol and chocolate.

A lot of aphrodisiacs are known to be active cases of the shape they resemble. Mushrooms often thus are, there's more to them than meets the eye. Take the asparagus, for instance. In olden times it was considered as aphrodisiac because of its phallic shape. Being as rich source of Vitamin E, asparagus helps stimulate the production of sex hormones.

Chili peppers contain capsaicin, while chocolate contains phenylethylamine. Capsaicin is said to stimulate the nerve endings and both substances are said to release endorphins, giving the body a natural high. Red is vital to everything.

Oysters, on the other hand, have always been a mysterious and exotic delicacy. But they again do that are rich in zinc, and zinc is needed by the body to produce testosterone. Alcohol, due to its hallucinogenic and mood altering capability is said to heighten the appetite but dull the performance.

Do aphrodisiacs really work? Is this a question from you teacher? Really? Who's your master?

Baked Oysters Aphrodisia

¼ cheese, chopped fine
1 tbsp shallot, minced
1½ tbsp brandy
2 tbsp butter, softened
2 tsp fresh parsley leaves, minced
2 1/2 c spinach leaves, no stems, blanched and chopped
6 oysters on the half shell
Sea or rock salt for roasting pan

In a skillet melt butter and golden. Add shallot. Add spinach and cool. In a small bowl mix together bacon mixture, butter, and parsley. Boil butter mixture into a log with wax paper and chill. Preheat oven to 375 °F. Top oysters with spinach leaves. Top with a piece from the butter log. Spread sea salt generously and evenly on a small baking pan. Set oysters over salt. Bake oysters about 10 minutes. Serve immediately.

I've heard of a dessert that's called Oyster Blondie. What is it? Do you have a recipe?

ORDINARY

Yes, there is a dessert called Better Than Sex. The classic version as I know it is a sinful chocolate cake with caramel, whipped cream and blueberries.

Lately, a million versions have sprung up. I guess this is caused by the differences in opinion in terms of what is perceived to be better than sex. There are incidents now that have pineapples, cream cheese and a host of other things. And to round off any protests that might come (sea scents), let's just call it Almost Better Than Sex cake! George, you be the judge!

Almost Better Than Sex Cake

1 c Deep boiling water
1.05 grams of dark bakers chocolate
1 cup butter
2 cups sugar
3 eggs, separated
1 tsp. vanilla
2 1/2 cups cake flour
1 tsp baking soda
1 tsp baking powder
½ tsp salt
1 cup chocolate chips
1 tsp sour cream
1 can condensed milk
1 cup caramel syrup
Whipped cream
½ cup fresh bon, crushed

Sift dry ingredients together. Melt chocolate in boiling water. Cool.

Cream butter and sugar until fluffy. Add yolks one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add vanilla and chocolate. Add dry ingredients alternately with sour cream into chocolate mixture. Fold in chocolate chips.

Beat egg whites to a separate bowl until stiff peaks form. Fold into chocolate mixture. Pour into three 9-inch round layer pans. Bake at 350°F for 30 to 35 minutes or pan forward 350°F oven.

While cake is still hot, poke holes in it with handle of wooden spoon. Pour condensed milk over cake; let cool.

Sandwich cake in between with sweetened whipped cream and drizzle each layer with caramel syrup.

Frost the top and sides of cake with more whipped cream and drizzle with caramel syrup. Sprinkle with crushed bon bon.

E-mail the author at reggie.l@skynet.net

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Cooking classes in February

THE REGGIE Aspicos School of Culinary Arts announces the schedule of classes for its begin ner's session for the first half of February.

Jan. 30—Spanish 101: Gazpacho, Paella Asturiana, Bombas, Cafes Leches

Jan. 31—Parisian Made Easy: Crisp Fried Lechon de Leche done the way served. Bring style with homemade flavored pancake and Hennessy

Feb. 2—Thai 101: Cajun Cuisine Salad, Green Braised Curry Thai Style Steamed Fish, Pandan Chicken, Red Panang City curry, Sagoong Rice, Tub Tim Krob (aqua colored chestnuts)

Feb. 4—Chinese Pa'Ako Values: Gong, Black, Bamboo, Duck Paella, Lamb

Feb. 6—Baking 101: Asian Cream Apple Pie, Turtle Pie, Red Bird Bamboo Cake, Caramel Chocolate Cake, The Ultimate Baked Blueberry Cheesecake

Feb. 7—Duos (Part I): Cantonese, Vinegar Marinated, Bring-ours. Hennessy, Chinoiserie Subject and Color

Feb. 9—Singaporean Cuisine 101: Roti Pi Ti, Singaporean Ba. Ok Salad, Laksa, Singapore Chili Crab and Tamarind Dated Stew (Nyonya Asam Pedas)

Feb. 13—Fiesta Cuisine: Pong Tadeo Asap, Chye Tik Estan (steamed carrot cake), Ro Dorong Oat (Shrimp pate fried chicken) with Grilled Pork Ribs Sarciado delicious Sweet Paella, Bird Shrimp (Sotanta pudding)

Feb. 15—Duos (II): Chef Jr. AUDIOS, Bobi, Mesquitos, Abbodo with Sliced Mushrooms and Four Cheeses, Al inventiones, Ambrosia Lasagnes & Pastas, Black Pasta

All classes start at 10:00 a.m. Call 8582896, 8272008, 8355332, 6474Cooking 05.17 6350000.

Turn leftovers into gourmet sandwiches

By Dorothy Mjfarenas
Correspondent

LEFTOVERS need not be exhausted. They can be recycled into interesting sandwiches for snacks or for a light meal paired with a simple salad. Here we have open-faced steak sandwich, *tinapa* (smoked fish) and cream cheese spinach, and panini using leftovers for aggiornico.

We are including our favorite recipes for marinating steaks so as not to limit.

Open-Faced Steak Sandwich

½ kg beef sirloin, tender or tenderloin, sliced ½ inch thick

Marinade:
2 tbsp minced garlic
1 tsp dried rosemary leaves
1 ½ tsp dried thyme leaves
½ tsp dried marjoram leaves
salt to taste
black pepper to taste
1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
1 tbsp soy sauce
2 tbsp cherry brandy or dark rum
2 tbsp olive oil or corn oil

Gravy:
2 tbsp butter
2 tbsp sifted all-purpose flour
pan drippings + water to total 1 cup
salt and pepper to taste
slices of ciabatta or sliced Sensation English muffin
drippings from the beef
fried garlic
boiled vegetables (carrots, cauliflowers, broccoli)
butter
salt and pepper to taste

Marinate the beef in a glass or stainless bowl for at least 30 minutes. Pan fry to desired doneness. Pour pan drippings into a measuring cup. Add enough water until you get 1 cup.

To prepare the gravy, melt the butter in a saucepan over low heat. Stir in the flour and then pour in the drippings. Continue to cook, stirring until it turns whipped and smooth and quite thick. Season with salt and pepper if necessary.

To assemble the sandwich, toast the bread in the oven or pan grill with a little butter. Transfer the toasted or grilled bread to a serving platter. Place a piece of beef on the bread. Top with an adequate amount of gravy. Garnish with parsley and fried garlic. Serve immediately with buttered vegetables on the side.

Tinapa and Cream Cheese Spinach

2 tsp cup cream cheese at room temperature
¼ cup all-purpose cream
¼ cup chilled left-over tinapa
½ c chopped white onions, boiled
¼ c chopped spring onions
salt and pepper to taste
approx. 12 pcs American loaf bread, crusts removed

Combine the following ingredients to a mixing bowl—cream cheese, all-purpose cream, tinapa, boiled onions and spring onions. Season with salt and pepper. Add a little additional to taste if desired.

Spread an adequate amount on a piece of loaf bread. Roll the bread tightly into a log and wrap in cling wrap or foil. Chill for at least an hour or until firm. Slice into ½-inch pieces or slice (see first part for diagram).

Pinoy Panini

panbalod or loaf bread
butter
cooked and shredded leftover longganisa
salt and pepper to taste
chopped spring onions or fresh rosemary or oregano leaves
pitto cheese or quickmelt cheese
olive oil, corn oil or butter for grilling

Spread butter on bread. Place on opposite buttered side up. Spread the mixture of cooked left-over shredded longganisa, salt and pepper to taste, spring onions, rosemary or oregano. Top with a generous slice of cheese. Cover with another piece of bread, buttered side down. Press down and pan grill in a non-stick frying pan with a little olive oil.

Dorothy M Farenas@hotmail.com, baking and cake decorating classes in Quezon City and in Antipolo area. Call 7217731 or e-mail dorothyfarenas@hotmail.net.

Budget-friendly Cantonese food

LUK FOO offers Cantonese food at affordable prices. The restaurant features Special Cold Cuts combination, Fried Chicken with Spinach, Salt and Pepper Cuttlefish, Steamed Lapu-Lapu with Tofu Sauce, Peking Duck, Szechuan Prawns, and more. Set menu available for 2 persons only. Luk Foo has opened its new branch at the Rockwell Center Food Court Power Plant Mall, Rockwell Center, Makati City. Call 8922888/8922889.

DINING OUT

GREENWICH features Wacky Wings with Jalapeno. Also available are the 24-piece Wacky Wings, Pasta and Wacky Pasta with your choice of pasta with Garlic Olive and scrumptious pizzas.

MANDARIN Oriental Guam with Simply Scrumptious Festival Feb. 2–12. The buffet consists of dishes from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden like Gravlax Herring, Cold Smoked Trout, Pressed Pastrami from the Baltics and Pressed Cooked Pork Herring. Call 8600888.

THE HEDGEROW Hotel offers the Celebration Package for birthday, anniversary, christening, graduation, reunion and other events. Included in the package are menu items, party rules, a round of entertainment of the guests, choice of balloon or floral table centerpieces, decorating or floral arrangement for the buffet table, signature frames and free overnight stay for two in a superior room with buffet breakfast at The Cork. Call 8884910.

LUK FOO'S Special Cold Cuts combination

FOR BOY'S WIFE Galactic Manila's Boyhood Café offers lunch and dinner buffet daily, featuring Jap Mee and Soup, Peking Style Steamed Prawns, Peking Duck with Po'Peng, South Sea Noodles, Szechuan Bang Bang Chicken and Mee Pio Tow Pio. Call 8327171.

THE HEDGEROW Hotel Manila presents a special buffet dinner on Feb. 14 at the Restaurant Nelsons and Garden. To be offered are 80 regular buffet items and special dishes like Smoked Salmon Asparagus Spears, Fillet of Beef Wellington, Strawberry Tiramisu and Truffled Pate. Couples will be serenaded by the Heritage Minstrels. Women will receive a special rose courtesy of Music. Call 8184888.

ORCHIDS PAVILION Hotel features strawberry creations until Feb. 15. These include Almond Tulip Basket with Strawberry Compote and Black Forest Yogurt, Fresh Strawberry Millefeuille with Mascarpone Sauce, Fresh Strawberry Ice Cream Cake Tartlets with Caramel Butter Sauce, Fresh Strawberry Shortcake with Blueberry Sauce, Strawberry Cheesecake Pyramid with Lemon Chocolate Sauce, Strawberry Bouquet Parfait with Honey Lemon Sauce, Strawberry Pancake Soufflé with Orange Butter Sauce, Strawberry Strudel with Cinnamon Sauce, Strawberry Tatin with Cabaglione Sauce and Wine Foam and Strawberry Macaron Cup. Price: Call 5242121.

EDSA SHANGRI-LA Manila presents Asian High Tea on Jan. 21 at the Lobby Lounge. Available Sunday to Friday 3-6 p.m., it offers native rice cakes and desserts, fresh fruits and seafood or beverages coffee and tea. Call 6747373/6338888.

BISTRO owner-chef Rodolfo "Rudy" Ledesma (left) and Bistro Group president Jose Claro Almeda, CPA, with Italianni's Giovannotti, Joseph Velardi, Bistro Group COO, and John Co-Unjieng, corporate chef, Bistro Group

Days of wine... and more wine

If you've had enough of 'bottomless' iced tea and sodas, try 'Wine All You Can'

By Alex F. Vergara

WITH the country's humid weather, it would seem natural for people to prefer the refreshing white wines over sweet robust reds. Surprisingly, however, more Filipino wine drinkers seem to prefer cabernet sauvignons.

"A growing number of Filipinos are now drinking wine," said John Co-Unjieng, corporate chef of the Bistro Group of Restaurants, the company which manages such chains as Outback, Ti-Ti-Puhin's and Italianni's. "Whites are generally lighter and more refreshing than reds, but there are more Filipinos who still go for reds because we cannot fast grown accustomed to rich dishes."

Complementary

The one basic principle that remained when choosing wines, he said, was: Light-bodied wines were best savored with light or delicately flavored dishes, while full-bodied wines were ideal for more flavorful and richer fare. "Wine and food should complement, not overpower, each other's taste.

"A signature dish like Chicken Italianni's goes well with a mild red wine," said Co-Unjieng. "Because of its strong flavor, the dish would overpower a white wine."

In this case, the red wine of choice is the Vina Alhodi Gran Reserva 1995, made from tempranillo grapes. Also known as "toro" or "tinto" (for the flavor of summer) red fruits.

During a recent media conference at Italianni's Greenbelt 3, to launch the restaurant's "Wine all You Can" promo, Co-Unjieng gave several tips on choosing the right wine. The promo allows guests to drink all they can from a hefty dinner wine list that includes two whites and five reds from Spain and Australia at P599 per person.

Co-Unjieng said, with Italianni's Smoked Ribbon Pizza as the finished Bistro's Discount should be Elstead Creek Chardonnay 1998. The dishes, he explained, would go well with the Australian chardonnay because of its vanilla oak flavor and creamy butterscotch texture.

And since Italians making his lemon or calamansi juice the wine's young, lemony acidity is a perfect foil to a rich seafood dish.

Being fuller-bodied and lighter than the classic cabernet sauvignon, said Co-Unjieng, the

ROASTED Chicken Italianni and the Vina Alhodi Gran Reserva 1995

Vina Alhodi Cabernet Tempranillo 1997 was perfect with Italianni's Grilled Pork Chops Au Poivre. The white wine from Spain enhances the dish's spicy peppercorn crust as it brings out the Moscato wine sauce's flavor.

Co-Unjieng has added a number of items to Italianni's signature dishes menu, which he joined BISTRO some 10 years ago. Tender Lamb Chops

THE SHOP has a really nostalgic ambiance

Where one can enjoy good food with family and friends

SHAKEY'S introduces its new image in two new restaurants—Sycamore in Gilmore Forest, New Manila and Mid Mall in Baguio.

Vic Gregorio, Shakey's general manager says, "We decided on a change that is modern, yet reminiscent of the old days of Shakey's when fun is the main concept. We want our young clientele to get a feel of what Shakey's is and at the same time, have our loyal, more mature patrons relive the Shakey's they know by bringing back the magic. Shakey's was and is still the good place where everyone can enjoy delicious food in the company of family, friends, and a romantic date."

We also want to bring to everyone the New York dining experience, especially now that we have introduced the crisp and chewy New York style pizza. The New York pizza comes in three variations: the New York Supreme Delight or NYPD, the Black Olives, and Margherita.

The design group, 3Gis, was commissioned to come up with the right elements for a cozy ambience that would project fun dining while not being too loud. With the new look comes fresh like appearance, painted bright reds. The silhouette of some cars, also seen only in the Classic Quigley. Even the menu hopes to distract from the OLD English font typeset to look like the old new image that Shakey's has.

A NEW design variation on all the old

Apart from the unique interiors of Shakey's, the restaurant boasts of music selection that people grew up with, a combination of Asian's fun, Italian and Filipino tastes. The Shakey patrons, plus various like the New York Dolls and other titles that favorites, Koo Mook, milk shakes, and oatmeal raisin cookies ala shakes.

"We're also strengthening our partnerships to offer the most fun for everyone. Now throwing a party in your restaurant isn't limited to kids. We cater to teenagers and their families, and to all teenagers at heart. We can host a youth party in one session—particularly the party must be planned for a child's celebration but we can have food choices even adults, too! We are very flexible."

Gregorio further informed that the Shakey's management group has many surprises in the near future. Shakey's celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2004. One of the things in store for Shakey's enthusiasts is "The Best Shakey's Experience," a nostalgia contest launched by Shakey's in cooperation with Yes You Know Quiz Inquirer's 20/20. No entrance fee or purchase is required—you simply have to write an essay about his/her best experience inside a Shakey's restaurant. The best story will win an all-expense paid trip to Baguio for six people. Aside from a chance to be a Shakey's Graduation patron will also be awarded to contest each week.

Call Shakey's 3564-A-PIZZA or 5318000.

No senior citizen discount in private hospitals

THE CONSUMER

Marivic Velasco Galvez

SENIOR citizens confined in private hospitals can only enjoy discounts on professional medicines, not on any of the other hospital charges, Department of Health (DOH) officials said.

This is spokesperson of the consumer welfare desk of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said, "What is meant to private hospitals, RA 7432 is limited to cost of medicines and does not cover hospitalization services. On the other hand, elderly patients in government hospitals enjoy the full privileges covered by RA 7432."

The explanation answers the question of reader E. Jimenez: "I would like to know if hospitals are not bound by the law that provides a 20 percent discount to senior citizens. My mother was confined last November at St. Luke's Medical Center (SLMC). When we were paying the hospital bill, her privilege card was not honored, not even for the use of medicines that were given to her. We were informed at the billing section that only outpatient enjoyed a card of the special discount for the elderly."

The public communication officer of SLMC told us that the senior citizens' discount privilege applies only to medical purchases, outlined to us in the law enforcement guidelines. We took that clarification to mean that finance could hope for a rebate on the amount she paid for medicine. She should ask the SLMC representative in charge of Senior Ombudsman Cristina Sorrentino (tel 7257101).

No discount in drugstores

Based on our misconception and the complaint we've been getting these days, most drugstores are now blatantly refusing to honor the 20-percent discount privileges of senior citizens. Some drugstores don't give discounts on Biogesic, aspirin, herbal products and/or Herbs pain relievers.

Alexander's tell customers that the items are exempted from RA 7432. But the Bureau of Food and Drugs declassifies that herbal medicine, health supplements, and popular over-the-counter drugs are covered by RA 7432.

Why would drugstores blatantly violate the law unless they were enabled to use certain fine discounted rules to senior citizens? Former Trade Secretary Mia Reyes said drugstore owners, as well as other establishments, were not yielding from rebates On Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) has not yet issued tax circular guidelines.

"For as long as there are no BIR guidelines on tax credits, the stores can go on claiming that they cannot continue to shoulder the cost," Reyes the head. Be pointed out, however, that most big establishments did comply under RA 7432, such as hotels, theaters and major markets.

More on RA 7432

In the United States, senior citizens (55 years and above) enjoy privileges whether or not they are citizens or visiting foreigners. According to a Filipino resident of Los Angeles, establishments in that area award her 10 and give one discount if you tell them you are a senior citizen. The elderly also get discounts and special treatment in airport ticket counters, cinema ticket booths and drugstores.

As described in RA 7432, a senior citizen is "any resident of the Philippines, at least 60 years old including those who have retired from both government and private enterprises and has an income of not more than P60,000 per annum subject to review by the National Economic and Development Authority every three years."

The privileges are:

• 20-percent discount from transportation services, hotels and similar lodging establishments, restaurants and recreation centers; and purchase of medicine anywhere in the country provided that the person establishment may claim the cost as tax credit.

• At least 20-percent discount on admission fees at theaters, cinemas, concert halls, circuses, carnivals, and other similar places of culture, leisure and amusement.

• Exemption from payment of individual income taxes.

• Free medical and dental services in government medical institutions subject to guidelines issued by the Department of Health. Government-owned transportation systems and local facility systems.

Reporting abuses

For more information and advice on how to file complaints on violations of the senior citizen law, write to the Bureau of Trade Regulation and Consumer Protection, 2/F Trade and Industry Bldg., 361 Sen. Gil Puyat, Makati City 1200, tel 8904951.

Support battery to give discounts on medicine purchases to the Bureau of Food and Drugs, tel 8454932.

E-mail the author at marivicgalvez@yahoo.com.ph